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June 2, 1885.

Vol. XVI. Single
Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 410.

Deadwood Dick's Diamonds; or, The Mystery of Joan Porter.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.



"BACK!" THE RUFFIAN CRIED, TO DEADWOOD DICK. "ADVANCE ANOTHER STEP, AND I'LL BLOW THE GAL'S BRAINS OUT!"

Deadwood Dick's Diamonds;

OR,

The Mystery of Joan Porter.

A Story of the Latest Detective Triumph of Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

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CHAPTER I.

AN UNLUCKY GAMBLER.

APPLEJACK CITY had one saloon, with which at the time of our story was combined a faro bank, a general supply store, a pawnbroker's and money exchange, a few tent habitations, and a good bed of paying placer dirt.

Hotels were not needed, as there was no likelihood that the camp would ever boom.

One stage a week was another luxury.

The town took its name from the fact that the first man who located there brought with him a jug of applejack. This same man afterward put up the "High Jack" saloon, and imported a barrel of applejack from Denver.

Small though the cluster of cabins and tents, Applejack City boasted of a population of something like a hundred and fifty souls—allowing, of course, that every one of its rough citizens possessed souls—and as the claim panned out fairly, gold-dust was in free circulation, and the faro bank at the High Jack reaped a nightly harvest.

One dark, rainy night, at an hour bordering upon midnight, the faro table was surrounded by a group of roughly-clad but stalwart knights of the pick and pan, who were eager spectators of a game of more than ordinary interest.

The bar, too, was liberally patronized, but the chief interest appeared to be centered about the board of the green cloth.

Of the spectators, none call for special notice. It is of those at the board we write.

In all, six men engaged in the game, counting the dealer, who was a shrewd-looking, dark-complexioned fellow of thirty-five, with a black mustache, waxed out at the ends, an eagle eye, and a white expanse of shirt-front, emblazoned with a diamond pin of unusual size.

Next to him sat a man whose appearance and attire suggested that he might recently have come from the East, for he was well-dressed, and his features but little tanned. He was about the same age as the dealer, well-proportioned, and round-featured. His eyes were bright, brown, and scintillating. His hair and side whiskers verged upon the sandy. Though at a glance not a bad-appearing man, there was something about the curve of his mouth that was sinister and forbidding.

By the dealer, he was addressed as Mr. Halsey.

Next to him sat a very ordinary looking young man, with a tuft of goatee and a certain pose of the head that marked the reckless adventurer. He was dressed as Jerry June.

Next was a quiet appearing individual, who seemed more inclined to play than to talk. He was of medium build, and attired in a serviceable suit of jet-black cloth, his figure indicating suppleness and muscular power. His face was handsome, after a half-wild type of beauty, peculiar to the frontier.

He was an American, plainly enough, but the devil-may-care expression of eyes and mouth indicated to the close observer the man ready for any emergency.

His eyes were dark, keen, observant, magnetic. He wore his hair cut short, and a graceful dark-brown mustache adorned his lip.

This man was known, or had dropped into the game, as Edgar Arnott—a new arrival in Applejack City.

The fifth member of the party was a burly, evil-looking customer, rough of aspect and manners, inclined to be quarrelsome, and known as Frisco Bill.

The sixth player was also a new-comer in the camp—Bill Bird, by name, he said. He had been playing for hours, in hard luck.

He was tall and slender in person, possibly twenty-five years of age, and had a consumptive look, augmented by a dry, hacking cough. Dissipation, too, had evidently had much to do with his cadaverous appearance.

His attire was coarse and ragged, and his slouch hat apparently had been riddled by at least a score of bullets.

No man at the table wore exposed weapons.

That was a rule which all who played at High Jack were forced to observe.

Bill Bird had arrived that very day, and had announced that he had the "spondulicks," and proposed to gamble the strength of his pile—that he intended to go away from Applejack with his resources largely augmented, or leave his entire stakes behind.

As may be supposed he had no difficulty in getting a game started.

Edgar Arnott and Frisco Bill had not taken a hand until evening. The others had been playing since noon.

Just how much money Bill Bird carried, he did not announce; but, as the stakes were large and he had lost steadily from the first, it was evident that he had been well "heeled."

The bank had caught on to a good percentage of his money until Edgar Arnott dropped in, when he appeared to be the most fortunate of the winners.

The game at the High Jack was considered to be on the square, as Fen Franklin had a reputation for honesty belonging to but few gamblers; yet it seemed wonderful how bad luck should follow Bill Bird so fatefully, and more than once, Halsey and Arnott suspiciously watched every movement of Franklin's nimble fingers, as he dealt from the box.

"No man ever had such infernal luck as this!" Bird declared, as he lost once more, and a hum of surprise escaped the spectators.

"That's over eight thousand dollars I'm out!"

"I think if I were in your place I'd quit before I was teetotally broke!" Edgar Arnott advised.

"Broke?" Bird echoed. "Humph! I ain't broke, yet."

"Nor do I think it is one player's place to give another player advice in this game!" Halsey declared, irritably.

"Oh! that's altogether a matter of individual opinion!" Arnott calmly retorted.

Bird lost again—and again, and again!

Then, paler than was his usual wont, he arose from the table.

The others eyed him expectantly. More than one player had been known to blow his brains out in that very room.

"Are you done?" Fen Franklin asked, his hand carelessly resting near his hip pocket.

"No, I am not done. I placed my last money on the queen, then, gents, but lost. Will you rest the game ten minutes, until I get more cash?"

"Oh! certainly—anything to accommodate you, Mr. Bird!" the dealer suavely replied.

"Thank you. Mr. Arnott, may I have a word with you in private?"

"Certainly, sir!" And arising, Arnott followed the gaunt gambler from the saloon; but not without surprise, for he had never seen him before that night.

Outside, in the deep gloom of the pouring night, the two paused and faced each other.

"Arnott!" the consumptive said, huskily, "you and I are comparatively strangers, but that don't matter. You have seen what infernal luck I've been having, and had the heart to advise me to quit. That's all right. I like you. The rest of 'em are sharks in there. But I'm game. It's die dog and eat the hatchet with me. Have you got ten thousand dollars to lend me for an hour?"

It was certainly a startling request, but Arnott was not wholly unprepared for it.

"Bird!" he said, "that's far beyond my pile. I haven't got over a thousand with me."

"If you could spare me the sum I named, would you do so?"

"If I thought it would better your fortunes—yes!"

"Thank you. I see you're the man I thought you was. You can go inside now. Tell 'em I'll be back in a jiffy."

"Where are you going?" Arnott demanded, quickly, his suspicions aroused that the queer fellow had intended suicide.

"Yonder!" and Bird pointed toward the pawnshop, a few rods away, where a light still burned in the window.

Then, with a dry laugh he strode away, Arnott watching him until he had disappeared within the "bank."

CHAPTER II.

THE DIAMONDS "PUT TO SOAK."

THE pawnshop, or Collateral Bank, as it was named, sprung into existence soon after the inception of the town itself.

Its founder was a wide-awake young man, of less than thirty years, named Abraham Levi. Although he was, as his name indicated, of Jewish descent, he was thoroughly American in

language and habits, and soon found favor with the denizens of Applejack Camp.

Ostensibly his place was a pawn-shop, on the plan of those conducted in larger cities, but in reality the main object was for brokerage on gold, a great majority of miners preferring to exchange their dust for greenbacks, at a large discount.

Although Abraham's business was principally that of exchange, he not infrequently loaned money on pledges of watches, jewelry, fire-arms and other marketable goods—loans usually solicited by parties who had been gambling, over at the High Jack, and had lost all, or to some mountain tramp perennially "busted," who was craving for three fingers of bug-juice.

No pawn-broking law affected the out-of-the-way city of Applejack; hence, Abraham never gave more than a fraction of the value of an article, and charged a tremendous interest to the occasional individual who redeemed his goods.

Pledges not redeemed (according to Levi's self-manufactured code) were forfeited, and liable to be sold to the first applicant who wished to purchase the article.

Abraham, as stated, was past twenty-five, graceful, and at the same time athletic of build, rather handsome of face, with close-curling black hair and mustache, and brilliant eyes of the same color.

He dressed nicely, and everybody in Applejack presumed that he was perfectly satisfied with the business he did, as it was a rare thing to find him in ill-humor, or in any ways discourteous.

It was late—yet, applicants for loans usually came in late—and the young money-lender sat in his office, dozing in a comfortable arm-chair, when there came a brisk rap at the door.

Never a sound sleeper, Abraham was awake in an instant, and upon his feet.

He turned up the light, first; then took a six-shooter from his pocket, and advanced to the door, cocking the weapon, as he went.

"Who is there, and what is wanted?" he demanded, before unlocking the door.

"Dead Broke, Esquire—and want a loan!" was the significant response.

"On what?"

"Diamonds!"

Levi hesitated a moment, then he opened the door, admitting Bill Bird, the unfortunate looser at the High Jack.

"Oh! ye can put up the pop!" the young applicant said, looking at the pawnbroker's revolver. "I can dodge bullets, but am on the square, allee samee. I judge by the three balls outside that you advance money on security."

"I do!" Abraham replied, closing and locking the door, and still maintaining a firm grip on his weapon. "How much money do you want?"

"Enough to go over and clean out that den of sharps across the street!"

Abraham smiled.

"I'm afraid I couldn't accommodate you to that extent, unless you are a lucky player!" he declared.

"Lucky! I'm the unluckiest devil in ten States. That's no business of yours, though. How much money have you got?"

"How much do you want?" evasively.

"Oh! you're a careful cuss, ain't you? But, that's right. I wish I was as careful. Why, I'll try to make ten thousand dollars do me."

"Ten thousand dollars?"

"You heard me?"

"But you're crazy. What security have you to offer for so much money as ten thousand dollars?"

Abraham was undeniably astonished.

"Security?" Bill Bird repeated, thrusting one gaunt hand into an inner pocket of his coat—why, then, mister!" and he brought forth a magnificent gold and ivory-mounted jewel case, and touching a spring, the lid flew open.

A blaze of brilliant light burst forth, that fairly dazzled the pawnbroker's eyes.

"What are they?—security?" Bill Bird demanded, in triumph.

"Diamonds!" Abraham exclaimed, gazing at them in astonishment.

"Well, I should affirm!" Bird grunted.

And, they were diamonds—a necklace, containing twenty-eight brilliant stones, a brooch with five stones, a pair of earrings of very large solitaires; four finger-rings with stones nearly as large; a cluster ring, and twenty sparkling polished stones, unmounted—a sight dazzling enough to tempt a man to steal.

All told, there were sixty-six magnificent stones, and no one of them could have been bought at private sale for less than one thousand dollars, while the set of earrings were worth twice that sum, each.

A man could well have paid seventy-five thousand and considered himself in great luck. Abraham was no amateur in his business.

Indeed, it well may be said that smart men only are fitted for the peculiar calling of pawnbroker—men skilled in trade and values, and who also are accomplished readers of faces and human character.

Abraham had served his apprenticeship under a stern master, and consequently knew that he now beheld a tempting fortune in those queens of valued gems, and the dazzling sight nearly took his breath away.

He took the case from Bill Bird's hands, and examined it and the diamonds, minutely, the gambler remaining mute, but observant.

"Where did you get these?" the Jew finally asked, without looking up.

"That's none of your business," was promptly replied. "They're mine, and that's enough. Will you give me the ten?"

"No. I can not!"

"Why, fool, they're worth seventy-five!"

"Maybe. I have not so much money."

"What will you do, then?"

"You must have money?"

"You bet!"

"What for?"

"Didn't I tell you I wanted to clean the High Jack crowd out?"

"You better keep the jewels, and let the cards alone?" Abraham suggested.

"You tend to your business!" he growled. "I know what I'm doing!"

"Well, then, I'll tell you what I'll do. Those are valuable jewels, worth fifty-thousand at the least. Have they been seen here? No? Well, they're dangerous things to have about. If it were known, in Applejack, about them, I'd not take a dollar for my chances to live a week. So you see, I run a great risk!"

"Bah! no one knows anything about those diamonds but you. You're safe!"

"Well, then, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you five thousand on them, for ten days.

Within that time you can redeem them by paying me ten thousand dollars. After ten days they are mine. These are my only terms, and I don't want the jewels at that!"

Bill Bird stood a moment, his face a puzzle. Only five thousand dollars!

Should he pawn those valuable gems for so insignificant a sum?

Coming from across the way, some evil voice seemed to whisper in his ear, "yes."

"You can have 'em. Give me the money!" he said, at last, hoarsely.

Abraham disappeared behind a partition, with the jewels. Soon he returned, laying in Bill Bird's hands, ten five-hundred-dollar notes, and a loan ticket.

"I had not the conscience to exact so short a time on you!" Abraham said. "The ticket gives you six months' time in which to redeem the jewels, at the same figures!"

Without a word, Bird pocketed the money and left the store.

Outside, he gazed toward the skurrying clouds, and lifting one hand on high, muttered, "Now, help me, Heaven! It is victory or—death!"

Then he hastened toward the High Jack saloon.

CHAPTER III.

BIRD PASSES IN HIS CHECKS IN TWO WAYS.

WHEN Edgar Arnott entered the High Jack saloon, after Bill Bird had disappeared, he was regarded inquiringly by those seated at the far-table.

"Where is your friend?" Franklin demanded, in a tone rather insinuating.

"To whom do you refer?" Arnott haughtily retorted.

"Why, Bill Bird, of course."

"I am not aware that he is particularly my friend—no more, at any rate, than any chance acquaintance."

"Bah!" and the dealer smiled superciliously. "If I am not off my guess, you two travel together."

"Indeed! Then you are decidedly off your guess. I never saw the gentleman before my arrival in your camp."

"What did he want of you?"

"That, sir, is practically none of your business."

Franklin's face flushed angrily, and his hand once more sought the vicinity of his hip pocket. Arnott anticipated him, however, for a revolver dropped out of his coat-sleeve into the grasp of his right hand.

There was a suggestive click, as the weapon came to full cock and was leveled at the dealer.

"You see I'm at home," Arnott said, coolly, "and this is my reception-hour. Do you understand?"

"Curse you!" Fen Franklin gritted. "I'll—"

"What will you do?"

"Kill you for your impudence!"

"If you get the chance."

Franklin set his teeth hard together but made no reply.

A moment later the door of the saloon opened and Bill Bird re-entered, in one hand grasping the money just received from Abraham Levi.

"Here I am!" he cried, flourishing the money so all could see it. "I'll either retrieve my losses now, or bust something!"

He took his former seat at the table, but Arnott did not resume his.

"I do not care to play any longer," he said, in answer to an inquiring glance from Bird.

"If you choose to throw your money away I do not propose to have a hand in ruining you. So go ahead without me," and turning, he strode from the vicinity of the table.

The men at the board gave vent to a grunt that indicated some little surprise; then the game was resumed.

The betting was heavier than in the preceding game, but it made no difference with Bird's fortunes—at least, no favorable difference; luck was plainly and inevitably against him, and he lost continually.

He uttered no murmur of vexation or regret, however, but played on with a reckless air, by which one might have judged that he regarded the whole affair in the light of an amusement.

Franklin was the heaviest winner, leaving Halsey the honor of second; but his winnings did not appear to make the gambler as jubilant as usual, for the scowl on his face betokened slumbering rage at Edgar Arnott's insult.

Although the crowd still watched the game with feverish interest, those at the table remained silent—even Bird himself having nothing to say, as dollar after dollar slipped through his fingers.

To have watched him toward the last, one might have inferred that he apparently took no more interest in the game than to play it out until his means were exhausted, for luck was so against him that there was little use of his expecting to win anything.

And so heavy were the stakes that soon he must drop out from lack of funds.

And the time came, shortly after one o'clock.

The wind was wailing dismally through the camp, and the rain beating a weird tattoo against the windows of the High Jack, when Bill Bird arose from the table after losing his last five hundred dollars on the queen—arose, pale but apparently nonchalant.

"That settles my playing!" he said, grimly.

"I've nary a cent more, and you gents have my boodle, sure enough. But, it don't matter much. Every dog has his day, and I've had mine."

He sauntered leisurely to the opposite end of the room, and sat down at a table, opposite Edgar Arnott, who was enjoying a quiet smoke.

"Well, I did it!" he remarked with a smile.

"I thought I would, and I did."

"What?"

"Lost—blowed every cent in; over fourteen thousand, all told!"

"You are foolish—very foolish!"

"Yes, so I suppose. But, what does it matter? I was bound to leave Joan a fortune, or else nothing at all—so, it's nothing at all!"

"Joan, who is that?"

"Joan—why that is—well, you'll know some day. I want you to find her."

"I don't understand you."

"I'll try and make it plainer, then. You see, I and Joan were lovers, and grow'd to like each other, tho' she was but a child in years. Her family were high-toners, and I was nothing better than a stockman, and they allowed Joan was too good for me, and forbid me ever to speak to her."

"That didn't amount to much, though, for Joan and I used to meet, on the sly, and finally we made it all up to run away, and get married, but the day, or rather, the night before we were to elope, I was knocked senseless, and borne away into the mountains, and there held a prisoner, for nearly a year, in an outlaw rendezvous, occupied by Lem Leech and his gang."

"Finally, however, I made my escape, and returned to Carson City, bent on finding Joan, and securing the fulfillment of our vows. On my arrival I found that I had fallen heir to twenty thousand dollars in money, and diamonds to the value of seventy-five thousand

more, all coming from a rich uncle, who had died, six months before, in the East.

"Of course I now felt on equal footing with Joan's people, and I hastened to call, to see my affianced. Arriving at her home, I was greeted effusively, by the old folks, and after some delay, was presented to a young lady, who they said, was Joan."

"Was it not Joan?"

"It was not! Although I had been absent nearly a year, they could not tell me that it was Joan, and make me believe it. To be sure, I could see much in the girl that belonged to Joan, as I had last known her, but it was not her, all their protestations to the contrary."

"This is singular, indeed. Both the parents insisted that it was their daughter, whom you had formerly known?"

"Yes."

"And what did the girl say?"

"She corroborated their statement, and tried to impress upon me that she was my Joan, but failed. She tried to relate incidents of our former acquaintance, and courtship, and made a botch of it, proving beyond a doubt to my mind, that she was an impostor!"

"This is certainly remarkable. In what way do you account for the change of girls?"

"I can account for it in no way. I am positive that my Joan, and the girl who occupies her place, are two distinct and different persons. But how, or why, this change has been made I do not know. To me, it is an unfathomable mystery."

"Do you think the parents are cognizant of the change, if one has been made?"

"Why, how could it be otherwise? Would not their parental instinct tell them the difference between the two girls, providing they were not aware that an exchange had been made? Of course it would! There is some deep mystery about the case, and I want you to undertake its solution!"

"Me?"

"Exactly."

"And why, pray, do you want me to attempt such a thing?"

"Because I know you to be quick and shrewd, and just the man for the job. I've been trying to find you, for a week. You are well known to me, by reputation, although you probably never heard of me before."

"Indeed! Who do you take me to be?"

"I don't take you to be any one, for I know that you are Deadwood Dick!"

Arnott's face betrayed considerable surprise.

"Whatever caused such a thought as that to hit you?" he asked, taking the cigar from his mouth.

"Oh! no matter. I am not mistaken, and I know it."

"Well, may be not. But I was not aware that my identity was known here. Why do you wish me to take hold of this case? It is of no particular interest to me."

"But you must make it so. You are as shrewd a detective as there is in the West, and I want you to take up the trail, and never lay it down until you find the real Joan, and learn why she was ousted from her home, and another girl put in her place."

"Why do you not try this, yourself?"

"Because I've made an unsuccessful attempt, already. Then, too, I've heartily tired of Western life, and am going home. Before I go, I want your promise that you will leave no stone unturned to find the real Joan, and restore her to her rights."

"Her rights?"

"Yes!" and here Bird took a large sealed package from his pocket. "After you have found her, open this and you will find all necessary instructions about what to do with her. Here, too, is a photograph of her, as she was when I saw her last, over a year ago."

Deadwood Dick, as we shall know Arnott henceforth, took the package, and also the photo., which was the likeness of a pretty maiden of some sixteen years—a girl of most attractive features, brilliant brown eyes, and sunny hair, and one whose face reflected her warm impulsive nature.

"She is very pretty!" Dick said, observingly.

"Does the present Joan look like this?"

"Somewhat, though she is not nearly so pretty."

Deadwood Dick was silent a moment.

"I can't bring myself to exactly understand this case," he said, finally. "You want me to undertake it, and yet, are not inclined to take hold of it yourself. You were a lover of this girl, you claim—I should think you would be eager to solve the mystery of her disappearance."

"So I am!" Bird replied, with a hard-drawn breath, "but I can make no further personal effort to discover her! I am too ill!"

"Indeed?"

"Exactly; but I am not barred from hiring some one to work out the mystery."

"I see. Well, how much do you propose to pay for the detective services that will be required to carry out the matter you have outlined?"

"I will tell you. To-night I left at the pawnshop over yonder seventy-five thousand dollars' worth of diamonds on which I received a six-months' loan of five thousand. It went with the rest at the faro-table. Here is the pawn-ticket by which with ten thousand dollars, they can be redeemed. Take the ticket—then, swear that you will leave no stone unturned to find the real Joan Porter, and on finding her, will execute the orders contained in the sealed package I gave you, and the ticket is yours. You can easily raise the ten thousand, I dare say, to redeem the diamonds with, and then they are yours, and you are worth sixty-five thousand, at the least calculation—all for carrying out my request, which may prove but an easy job."

"These Porters live in Carson City?"

"Yes, or did, at last accounts. The old man was a speculator and money-lender."

"How long ago was this?"

"Four months ago."

"How many in the family?"

"Only the old man, his wife, and the girl they now declare to be Joan."

"You were shut up in the mountains for nearly a year?"

"For about nine months."

"Your captors were—?"

"Lem Leech and his outlaw gang."

"How far are they located from Carson City?"

"Fifteen or sixteen hours' ride—not far from the new mining-town of Beelzebub."

"What was the object of keeping you in captivity?"

"I have no definite idea. I was treated well by the outlaws, 'cept they wouldn't let me out of the camp."

"Did you suspect that any other parties were concerned in the matter?"

"I suspected that Philander Porter had had a hand in it, in order that I should not associate with Joan. Of course, however, I lacked positive proof."

"Had you any rival for the first Joan's affections before your capture?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"And yet her people objected to your associating together?"

"Yes. They were bitterly opposed to it, and threatened violence to me if I did not go according to their wishes."

"And, yet, when you came back, and was worth upward of a hundred thousand dollars, they were more willing to receive you?"

"Yes. As soon as they learned that I was in Carson City, they sent for me to call. As soon as I saw the one they presented as their daughter, I told them it was not the Joan I had known. They declared that it was, and the girl insisted that she was the same Joan I had courted. But, I wouldn't be convinced, and caught and confused her, by several tests. Finally the old man got mad, and said that if his word was to be doubted, in his own house, I had better get out. I got, and never went back again."

"Did you express your doubts, to any of the neighbors?"

"No—only to one lawyer, named Darby, and he laughed at me, and said such a thing as an exchange of girls was too absurd for belief."

"Pardon me, but that's somewhat the way the matter appears to me. Unless the girls were exact counterparts, in every respect, the neighbors would surely detect a change."

"Maybe. But, it matters not; I am positively sure that my Joan has become the victim of some mysterious adventure or abduction, and the girl Number Two is substituted."

"You say old man Porter is rich?"

"It's said he can lay his hand on half a million in ready cash. He don't deal in real estate, but speculates so as to turn all his profits into the ready lucre."

"How long has he lived in Carson City?"

"Two years or thereabouts."

Dick had been jotting down notes, in a small memorandum-book which he now placed in his pocket.

"Well, Mr. Bird, the case as it stands before me contains many elements of mystery," he said, "and has, no doubt, plenty of work in it; however, as you have seen fit to make so liberal an offer, I will promise you to ferret out

the matter, to the best of my ability. It will require some cunning, however, to keep my eye on the pawnbroker, who holds the diamonds, and the case in Carson City. Perhaps I can arrange it."

"Very well. Do your best—more can't be asked of you!" Bird assented.

He then arose, and crossed over to the bar, where he evidently asked the bartender for a free drink, for the bottle was not set out, without considerable hesitation.

Bird poured out a brimming glass, and gulped down the fiery liquor, at a draught.

Then, waving his hand at Deadwood Dick, in a way evidently intended to imply good-night, he left the saloon.

A moment later was a loud pistol report, out-of-doors.

Quickly springing to the door, Deadwood Dick threw it open, and saw that his worst suspicions were confirmed.

Lying in front of the saloon, with a bullet-hole in his temple, was Bill Bird.

Ere he could be raised, and borne into the High Jack, life had become extinct.

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASANT AND PROFITABLE POKER.

As may be supposed, the suicide caused considerable excitement, for the time being, but it did not last as long as one might have expected.

This, perhaps, was owing to the fact that Bird was not the first man who had blown his brains out, in Applejack City, because of losing his last copper at the gaming-board. Several other discouraged tempters of Dame Fortune, had made a claim on the cemetery, by "passing in their checks at the great Cashier's office;" hence, Bird's death was viewed as little more than a passing event, by the frequenters of the High Jack.

To Deadwood Dick, however, his suicide but added to the mystery of the case the daring detective had promised to unravel.

Had Bird deliberately made his preparations, with a full intention to end his existence, or had he shot himself under the impulse of a sudden realization that he was out upon the world, penniless?

Dick favored the first-named theory.

The singular fellow had said he was going home!

Perhaps he had meant a home beyond the cares and troubles of this eventful life—a home far more extensive, than any upon this earth.

He had undoubtedly committed suicide, for a revolver was found clutched in his grasp, which was minus one bullet.

After he was viewed by the inmates of the saloon, the saloon-keeper volunteered to take charge of the remains, and give them a respectable burial, on the morrow.

The body accordingly, was laid out in another room, and within half an hour afterward, the majority of the High Jack habitués, had forgotten the suicide, in the excitement consequent upon the games, and the flow of "booze."

The High Jack kept open all night, and the most of its patrons had no thought of retiring, until a couple of hours before sunrise, two hours' sleep being recognized as a plenty, for any wide-awake man.

About an hour after the death of Bill Bird, a horse was ridden up to the door, some person dismounted, and entered the saloon.

All eyes were turned inquiringly upon the new-comer, for it was an unusual thing for an arrival in Applejack, at that hour of night.

A look of surprise flitted over the faces of the observers, for they beheld not a man, as they had expected, but, on the contrary, a woman, young and dashing, and handsome.

She had probably passed her first maidenhood; but her appearance was still youthful, her eyes brilliant, her features round and health-tinted, and her hair charmingly arranged, while her head was ornamented with a jaunty sombrero, and her well-contoured figure, was clad in a full suit of spotless gray cloth, including patent-leather top-boots on her feet, all serving to give her a dashing appearance.

Jewels glittered upon her fingers, and at her throat, a long gossamer coat had protected her from the rain, as she rode.

Weapons she wore none, to outward view.

The readers of the former "Deadwood Dick" novels, will have no difficulty in recognizing her as Deadwood Dick's ever-present side-partner, Calamity Jane.

And, to-night, she looked but little older, than when she and Dick literally "made Rome howl," up in the Black Hills, during the stirring days of 1876-77.

As she entered the High Jack saloon, her

eagle eyes gave one sweeping glance about the apartment, missing not a face; then, she advanced to the bar, and ordered a glass of wine, which she paid for, and drank.

If she had recognized Deadwood Dick, her face betrayed no token of the fact.

Leaving the bar, she sauntered over to a poker table, where Fen Franklin and Halsey were playing poker, the faro game having "petered out," for the night.

"Howdy, gents? How's luck running, to-night?" she said, taking a cigarette from her pocket, and lighting it.

"All to the bank!" Franklin replied, with a chuckle. "The bank is getting rich. D'ye think you can make a run on it?"

"Yes, for Heaven's sake, if you've got any luck, drop in!" Halsey spoke up. "Maybe there'll be a change. I'm tired of losing all the time. Haven't won a jack-pot, in an hour, of any size."

"Perhaps you were afraid to bluff!" the girl sport said, with a smile, as she drew a chair to the table. "How about limit?"

"We will start a game with no limit!" Franklin said, dryly. "Chips are five dollars apiece, for blues, which we 'most always use, for it's a shame to abuse one's privilege to lose."

"Eh? Well, that is news; but it's twenty I choose!" and she laid down a hundred-dollar note, and received the equivalent in two stacks of checks.

Herbert Halsey also invested a like sum, in ivories, and then the game began.

The betting started in two chips, and all hands passed and "came up" three times, until it was Calamity's say.

"Do you open it?" Franklin demanded, looking slyly at his hand.

"I might!" was the reply. "Give me two cards."

The deal was made.

The betting then commenced, cautiously, on small raises, until there were eighty dollars on the pot.

Calamity now dove down into her pocket, bringing forth several gold pieces, and a roll of bank notes, among which hundred-dollar bills were not wanting.

"I don't think it possible you can have four," she said, "so I'll see you, and go five hundred better."

"I'm out!" Halsey said, tabling his pasteboards. "You people can fight it out!"

"I'm not going to weaken!" Fen Franklin growled. "I've played poker too long to be bluffed, on a two pair. See you, and a thousand better!"

"Thank you!" and while scratching her head, Calamity glanced toward Deadwood Dick, and received a nod of approval.

No one else noticed the nod, however.

The crowd about the table now began to evince great interest, for this was no baby play, and it was plain that each bettor was of the gamest kind.

"See you," Calamity responded, covering the bet; "and now, let me see what I can do for you!"

She counted over her money, drew anotherwad from her pocket and added that—then pushed the entire sum into the pot!

"Five thousand!" she said, sententiously.

Franklin smothered an oath, and looked at his hand.

"What the deuce have you got, anyhow?" he growled. "I'm cussed if I don't find out," and he counted out five thousand into the pot. "Now then, show up!"

Calamity laid down her hand—three aces and a pair of jacks.

"I presume that will give me a glimpse at your hand," she smiled.

"You can take the pot!" the gambler said, with a fierce oath, as he seized the cards and shuffled them. "Cut for deal. I'll break you, or quit the business broke myself."

Calamity smiled.

The deal fell to her.

"One card!" Franklin chuckled, discarding one at a glance at his hand.

"Ditto here."

The betting again opened, and waxed hot and heavy until the whole of Calamity's money, and what she had won, were on the board.

The excitement now was at a high pitch, and both players were visibly nervous.

Franklin had opened the pot, and it was his say.

He examined the last bet, and then counted his money.

"I can just see you and that's all, making twenty thousand and fifty on the board. I hold three jacks and a pair of queens!" Franklin said.

triumphantly, exposing his hand after putting his last money on the board.

"Four aces and a king!" Calamity returned, laying down her hand. "The pot is mine."

"Take it!" the gambler growled, staggering from his seat. "Henceforth, some one else can run this table; I'm broke!"

The stakes being somewhat bulky made it no easy matter for Calamity to stow so much money away about her trim person; but she succeeded, and then ordered the bartender to "set 'em out" for the crowd.

While the rough audience were drinking, the girl sport passed near enough to Deadwood Dick to say in an undertone:

"Is it safe here with so much money?"

"Afraid not. Watch your chance and slip outside, and wait for the hoot of an owl at the lower end of the camp."

Calamity moved on, and joined the crowd at the bar.

One man had watched her movements closely, and that was Herbert Halsey; and he soon approached the sport, his hands thrust carelessly in his pockets.

"Ah! resting after the game?" he saluted.

"Rather," Dick replied. "Unfortunately, the hotel accommodations are not extensive."

"That's true. I fancy I shall pull out of this camp in the morning. Are you going to remain here?"

"I have not yet decided."

"You know the girl who scooped in the boodle?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I saw you talking to her."

"She first addressed me."

"Ah! yes—did she? Well, you know each other."

"What of that, sir?"

Dick's eyes were beginning to light up dangerously.

"Oh! nothing; only it struck me that you might be a couple of sharps, working in concert. In other words, I recognize the girl as Calamity Jane, and suspect, very naturally, that you are Deadwood Dick, the outlaw!"

CHAPTER V.

HALSEY SHOWS HIS TEETH—AND THE JEW SKIPS.

DEADWOOD DICK instantly arose to his feet, his face stern, and eyes flashing.

"Well, sir!" he said, grimly, "supposing I am the man you suggest—what of that?"

Halsey smiled, significantly.

"Oh! nothing in particular!" he answered, "only that if the people of Applejack City were to know who you are, it might go hard with you."

"I don't think so."

"I do. Miners, as a rule don't take kindly to road-agents, and the report of you, throughout Nevada, is so adverse to your interests that you'd be apt to experience throat disease were your identity made public. Then, too, if you will take notice, there are three armed men stationed in front of each door and window, who don't offer to go up to the bar and drink!"

Dick had already noticed the fact, while Halsey was speaking. He also took note that Calamity was still within the saloon.

"If I understand matters right, there's a double meaning to those posted sentinels!" Halsey went on, with a spice of triumph. "Franklin has got a grudge against you, and means to force you into a fight, and kill you. Then, I expect he calculates to make Calamity fork over her boodle, before she leaves."

"Indeed! You seem to be pretty well posted as to his calculations. You, perhaps are interested as much as the gambler, himself!"

"Oh! no, I just wished to warn you, and suggest that if it were known you are Deadwood Dick, the whole crowd would set upon you. In which event there'd be no more show of your getting out of here, alive, than there is of your becoming President of the United States!"

"You don't tell me! Then, am I to bow down and kiss your feet, out of gratitude for not telling the gang *who* I am?"

"Oh! no—that is not necessary. Of course, did I feel disposed, I could set the crowd upon you, with a result that you could scarcely appreciate. But, no doubt we can come to terms."

"I am not so sure about that. Terms, as you choose to call it, are something I rarely negotiate, with strangers."

"But, you will find it to your advantage to break your rule, for once."

"See here!" Dick said, sternly. "What are you driving at—what do you want?"

"To be frank, I want the package of sealed

instructions you received from Bill Bird!" Halsey retorted. "Also, the pawn-ticket for the diamonds! Give me them and I'll help you and Calamity to get out of here, without trouble. Refuse me, and I'll guarantee every person in the room shall know you, and turn their hand against you!"

For a moment, Deadwood Dick eyed the man, in astonishment.

The demand had come so suddenly, and in such a straightforward manner, that he could scarce believe the evidence of his senses.

How did Halsey know of the package, and ticket? Of what value were they, to him?

Did he know anything about the mystery of Joan Porter? was he an interested party?

These questions led the dashing detective's thoughts.

"What do you want of Bird's personal effects?" he demanded, regarding Halsey, searchingly.

"That's a matter of my own business, sir, and none of yours," was the prompt retort. "I want the papers, and intend to have them!"

"Well, let's see you get them! Step from before me, and go about your business, or I will knock you down!"

"Oh! I'll quit your society, but I'll make it hot for you!" and the man turned upon his heel, and strode toward the further end of the room, where Fen Franklin was talking with Jerry June.

Dick took a quick glance at his surroundings, and saw Calamity leave the saloon by a rear door, the guards making no effort to hinder her.

"It's for me, now!" he muttered, "and I'll bet I'm not in the shebang very long!"

He sauntered leisurely along toward the front door, but in such a sidewise manner, as to excite no suspicion that he had any idea of quitting the saloon.

Leisurely puffing away at his cigar, he came opposite the three men arrayed in front of the door, as a barrier against any one's passing out—savage-looking fellows, whose belts bristled with weapons.

The moment Dick came opposite them, a pair of revolvers dropped from his coat sleeve into his grasp, and instantly came to bear upon the guards, with a click! click! that announced them cocked, and ready for business.

"Away from that door, and allow me to pass out, or you are dead men!" Dick ordered, his eyes blazing dangerously. "Get, I say, or I'lliddle you!"

He had the drop as the guards, to their dismay, discovered, so, with a grunt, they stepped to one side.

Before they could draw a weapon, Deadwood Dick had thrown open the door, and leaped out into the black, stormy night, with a cry of defiance that pealed back into the saloon, chorusing with the howl of rage from the lips of Fen Franklin.

"Ten thousand curses! Stop him! stop him!" the gambler roared. "That man is Deadwood Dick, the road-agent, and five hundred dollars is offered for his arrest! After him—take him, dead or alive!"

Spurred by these words and offer, several men sprung from the saloon, with hoarse yells.

But if they expected to find Deadwood Dick awaiting for them to walk up and capture him, they were grievously mistaken, for the ex-Prince of the Road was nowhere in sight.

A hasty search was made throughout the camp, but no trace of him was obtained, and owing to the fury of the storm, all hopes of finding him had to be given up, much to the disgust of Fen Franklin and the Eastern-appearing gent, who was known at the High Jack as Mr. Herbert Halsey.

Meanwhile, let us follow Deadwood Dick.

Emerging from the saloon, he took to the middle of the single street and ran as fast as his feet would carry him. The mud of the street muffled his footfalls, and this, with the intensity of the darkness, made it easy for him to escape.

At a point where he had appointed to meet Calamity, he found her awaiting, and they hastened on until over a mile from Applejack City, when a halt was made in under the shelter of a friendly ledge.

As little fear of pursuit was entertained, Calamity dismounted, produced a bull's-eye lantern from her saddle-bags, and they soon had a well-shielded light.

A consultation was at once held, Dick apprising Calamity Jane of all the circumstances connected with his meeting with Bill Bird, and what had happened later.

"It's a mysterious case!" he added, in conclusion of narration, "but I reckon you and I ought

to be able to bring something out of it, Calamity."

"If we can't it will be funny!" the girl sport declared. "If we win the case, the diamonds are ours you say?"

"Yes; or, for that matter, they're ours now, Bird being dead. However, I promised him I'd look into the case, and so I will. You brought all the money with you?"

"Yes. We're worth over twenty thousand dollars now, Dick!"

"Thanks to your luck to-night, Jennie. Ter of this sum must go to redeem the jewels, as soon as the Jew opens up shop."

"True. And the balance, with the exception of a couple of thousand, we had better cache in some safe place in the mountains."

"Exactly. There's time enough for that between here and Carson City, however."

"Do you think we will be pursued as soon as it comes daybreak?"

"Very probable. Halsey wants the papers, and I've no doubt but he and Franklin, the gambler, will affiliate and give chase."

"Then we had better not linger here."

"On the contrary, we are in a safe place, for the present. The route toward Carson leaves Applejack in an opposite direction from which we have come, and if Halsey knows any thing about this Joan Porter case, as seems probable, he will naturally expect us to be en route for Carson and take that trail. The rain will have washed away all tracks, so that even an experienced trailer could not tell which way we went."

"I hope so. And, now, about the jewels. You will hardly dare to venture back into the camp to get them?"

"Did you bring my disguises with you?"

"One side of the saddle-bags is stuffed with them."

"Then, I can fix it all right."

"But have you no fears that the Jew may slide off during the darkness on his own hook? So valuable a collection of diamonds is a big temptation, worth, as they are, more than he could make at pawnbroking in a dozen years."

"I have been thinking of that. The Jew hasn't much of value, about his place, except money, and he could well afford to sacrifice his few pawn pledges, to get away with the diamonds. You remain here, and I'll hasten back, and see that he does not escape, providing he has not already done so."

"I had better go with you. Something might happen, that you would get into trouble!"

"Oh, I'll look out for Dick, every time. With so much money in your possession, you are better off here."

"Supposing you fail to return?"

"Then, secrete the money in a safe place, and cautiously investigate the cause of my delay."

He looked to his weapons; then, kissing Calamity, took his departure, down the gulch.

The night wore slowly away, and the girl sport awaited anxiously for Dick's return.

The storm continued to rage, furiously, nor did it abate in any particular degree, when the day began to dawn. The heavens were clouded and dark, and there was fair prospect of a continuous all-day's rain.

Just as day was breaking, Deadwood Dick reappeared. His face was gloomy and troubled, and he was visibly excited.

Calamity Jane did not need inquire the cause; then, too, he spoke before she had an opportunity to ask.

"The Jew has skipped!" he announced, "and he has taken with him everything of value. The diamonds, of course, went with him, and are lost to us, for the present, at least!"

CHAPTER VI.

DEADWOOD DICK ON THE SCENT.

ONE month later, was a night fully as wild as the one that witnessed the events we have chronicled of Applejack City, and the storm that passed over Carson City, Nevada, caused even the stoutest buildings to tremble on their foundations, for the wind blew a very hurricane, driving the rain in torrents, and filling the air with varied missiles.

The hour was past midnight, and the streets of the young city were deserted, when a person issued from a respectable-looking house, on Pacific street, and gazed cautiously from side to side, as he descended the steps.

He was clad in a gossamer, that reach to his feet, and wore a hat of the same material, that was pulled down to his eyes. What could be seen of his face was covered with a heavy black beard, which the wind tossed about, irreverently.

As he reached the bottom step, the man paused, and coughed, loud enough to be heard above the roar of the storm.

Instantly a man stepped from behind a tree box, a few yards away, and advanced—a dark, sinister-looking fellow, attired like the first man. In place of a full beard, however, he wore a fierce black mustache.

"Ah! is that you, Jacquett?" the man on the step saluted. "You are punctual!"

"I am always punctual, doctor," was the answer. "This is a rough night!"

"It is, indeed. I scarcely expected you would come, under the circumstances."

"Bah! Rain and wind have no terrors for me, sir, especially when there is money in the wind."

This, with a dry laugh.

"Oh! I suppose not!" the doctor returned, with a shrug. "Well, what is the latest, from Beelzebub?"

"Bad news, sir. You'd better take me inside if you want to hear it."

"Not in there!" the doctor demurred, with a deprecating glance toward the house he had just left. "Come down here, with me."

They went down the street, together; nor did they stop, until they were in one of the lowest quarters of the city, characterized by a rough class of shanties, rum-mills, and gaming-dens, some of which were still open.

One of the most pretentious of the whisky shops they entered, and seated themselves in a stall, a number of which were partitioned off, at one side of the room.

"No danger of our being heard, here!" the doctor said, after they had been served with drinks. "So, fire ahead. When did you leave Beelzebub City?"

"Twenty-four hours ago. I brought an extra horse, so as to save one day's time."

"Good! And, now, for the news!"

"Well, to begin with: Bird has passed in his checks—dropped out of the game, entirely."

The doctor started, and stroked his beard.

"The deuce you say!" he ejaculated.

"Jest as I tell you. He committed suicide."

"Suicide?"

"You bet! Plugged himself through the temple with a half-ounce of lead, and never wiggled his toes, afterward!"

"Where and when did this happen?"

"Over in Applejack Camp, a month ago."

"How did you come to hear of it?"

"Halsey was there, at the time."

The doctor bit his lip, and smothered an oath.

"What was Halsey doing there?"

"That's more than I know. You ought to be able to suspect."

"Curse him! Is he in Beelzebub, now?"

"Just that!"

"Then he is on the scent?"

"I know that. He told me as good—said that before Bird shot himself he placed his papers in a stranger's hands!"

"In a stranger's hands?" and a string of curses burst from the doctor's lips. "Did Halsey say who the fellow was?"

"Yes. He's known all over the West as Deadwood Dick. He was a road-agent, formerly, but is now a detective, with as many disguises as a Vidocq."

"Worse and worse! What became of the diamonds?"

"Bird pawned them to a Jew, for five thousand dollars, and gave the pawn check to Deadwood Dick, together with the documents. The next morning the Jew and all his valuables had disappeared, and so had Deadwood Dick, but it is not known whether the Jew took the diamonds, or whether Dick robbed and murdered him, concealed his body, and then made his escape."

"How did Halsey come to tell you all this?"

"I heard him mention being in Applejack, and knowing that Bird had gone there, I asked concerning him. Thus we drifted into conversation, and I worked the pump as far as I deemed judicious."

The doctor was silent a couple of minutes, during which he appeared to be in deep reflection.

"There's but little doubt in my mind," he said, finally, "but what Halsey has got a clew to the matter and is playing a hand, on his own hook. But, where did he get the clew?"

"You'll have to ask me something easier than that, doctor."

"What is Halsey's business? I never saw him but once, and know nothing about him."

"I'm not aware that he has any business. As a rule, he spends the most of his time at the card-tables."

After another pause, during which time the

doctor knit his brows in a scowl, he changed the subject.

"How is old Porter getting on?"

"Very slowly. He thinks he is getting better, but I'm of a different opinion. His step grows more and more feeble, each day, it strikes me, and his eye more dim. He'll never see winter."

"So much the better. Is he making money?"

"Hand over fist. He loans, at a big profit, and, besides that, he purchased the Red Knife mine, a few days ago, for a mere song, and the day following set a force of blasters to work, and the mine turns out to be a regular bonanza. He could sell it, to-day, for a cool hundred thousand."

"I am glad to hear of his good fortune. Is there any other news?"

"None in particular, except that Joan is besieged with a plenitude of suitors, among whom is a titled young Britisher—a Lord Lindsay, I believe he is called. He appears to have lots of rocks, too."

"To blazes with his rocks! But, let that pass. I will drop over, soon. In the mean time, I'll give you a letter to deliver to Mart Murdock, and you can be off as soon as suits your convenience."

He took a blank sheet of paper from his pocket, and wrote upon it for several minutes, with pencil. Then he inclosed the note in an envelope, and gave it to Jacquett, after addressing it to "Mart Murdock, Beelzebub, Nev."

"There! now; give that to Murdock, as soon as you arrive, and keep your eye open. Should this Deadwood Dick come there, instead of here, let me know in the quickest time possible. He may be a dangerous obstacle, so look sharp for him. And now, how much am I indebted to you?"

"Oh! the trip ought to be worth fifty dollars, especially on such a night as this."

The doctor evidently did not demur.

There was a jingling of coin—then, the two men arose, and left the saloon, going out into the furious night.

A moment after their departure, a man emerged from a stall adjoining that which they had occupied. He approached the bar, called for a drink, and invited the bartender to have one himself, which that professional unhesitatingly concluded to do—for the anti-treating law, was not yet in force, at the time, in Nevada.

Over the glasses, the man who had emerged from the stall took occasion to inquire:

"By the way, was that Doctor Norton who was just in here? His voice sounded familiar, but I didn't get a glimpse of him."

"No; that was Doc Darkley," the dispenser of bug-juice said, carelessly—"a sort o' quack, who's got more dust than patronage. Killed a man 'bout a year ago, but somehow managed to get clear."

The inquirer's curiosity was evidently appeased, for, lighting a cigar, he sauntered out of the saloon and betook his way toward a more respectable portion of the town.

This man was the very person Darkley and Jacquett had talked about—Deadwood Dick!

He had, in disguise, arrived in Carson City a couple of days before, for the purpose of working up the case of the mystery of Joan Porter.

About the first thing he learned was that Philander Porter had moved to the new mining-camp, called Beelzebub, nearly a month before, where the old gentleman had opened a banking business.

He had left no interests behind him, in particular, and it was likely he would remain in Beelzebub as long as the camp held out.

And it was believed in Carson City that Beelzebub had come to stay.

Further, Dick learned that the Porters had originally come from Chicago, where the head of the family had been a grain broker.

In response to his inquiries concerning Joan Porter, he elicited little or no information. The neighbors had nearly all known Joan, and put her down as a pleasant and pretty girl, and the life and sunshine of her parents' home.

Had she been absent during their residence in Carson City? Oh, no! she was a great home-body.

Did she resemble this photograph? (Here Dick would show the photograph he had received from Bill Bird.)

Oh, yes! that was Joan's picture—evidently taken a couple of years ago, for she had changed a trifle in the past year. She had finished her education, and that made her somewhat more womanly than she was at sixteen.

Yes, William Bird had once been her company, but he was not considered eligible society for her, and had been turned off. The neigh-

bors knew nothing of his having been in Carson City for about a year past.

So much, and no more, had Deadwood Dick learned up to this night, when, by the merest chance, he had been in the saloon and overheard the conversation between Doctor Darkley and his companion.

Of Abraham Levi and the diamonds, he nor Calamity had thus far been able to find any trace.

CHAPTER VII.

DEADWOOD DICK STRIKES A JOB.

BEELZEBUB, or, more correctly, Red Knife, was three days distant from Carson City, on horseback—that is to say, it took about three days of riding to traverse the distance between the two places.

The new mining-camp had first got the name of Red Knife from the fact that an Indian chief of that name had once been burned there at the stake.

Later, a delegation of miners had met and concluded to call the place Beelzebub, as, to use their own expression, "the devil was always to pay about the camp"—some one always quarreling, and getting carved or shot, or some sort of thievery going on.

The town was located in a pleasant little valley between two ranges of mountains, and had plenty of water from a mountain stream, and other natural resources, such as adjacent timber and pasturage, to make up a fair prospect of its being a permanent camp.

There were already about a hundred buildings, not counting numerous tented habitations, and the population was well up toward a thousand, and increasing daily.

The main street constantly presented a bustling scene, no matter whether night or day, and since the "boom" of the Red Knife mine, now owned by Philander Porter, everybody appeared to be in the best of spirits.

Beelzebub was not a placer camp.

What placer "lay-out" there was, was scarcely worth mining for; indeed, it was now considered too insignificant for consideration; two dollars' worth of gold per day was 'way below par.

It was deep down under the beautiful, grassy, and flower-decked surface of the valley, that lay the rich deposits of gold and silver quartz, which it was believed, would make the town a fame unequalled in the annals of mining.

The Red Knife and Owl mines were the only ones that had yet been opened, but preparations were being made to sink other shafts, and there was plenty of employ for all who were disposed to work.

Already the young "city" had all the peculiarities of its older and more successful predecessors, in the way of business establishments, and "fakes."

Saloons were encountered at almost every step, in connection with which, in nearly every instance, was either a gambling lay-out, or a dance-house, from which issued strains of music, night and day. Then, there were general stores, shooting-galleries, a big barn-like hotel called the Elephant, street fakirs, magicians, and other puppet shows—in fact the place seemed as lively as though some mammoth circus had pitched its tents there.

Among other business places, was the "National" Bank, established by Philander Porter; and the Beelzebub *Bull's-Eye*, a semi-weekly paper, issued by Yank Yowler, a six-foot individual, who had in former days been a "chaw'em-up" and faro dealer, but had become imbued with the idea that he was a literary genius and to get his hand in, had started the *Bull's-Eye* with an opening editorial to the effect that he "stood six feet in his socks, weighed one hundred and ninety pounds, was handy with the 'pop,' and was able and willing to back up anything that appeared in his paper!"

This was business, in its tersest form, and the readers of the *Bull's-Eye*, realizing the fact, were ready to agree that, say what he would against them, Yank Yowler knew how to run his own shebang.

About a week after the occurrence of the events chronicled in our last chapter, the mid-week issue of the *Bull's-Eye*, made its appearance on the street of Beelzebub, and sold like hot-cakes, for fifty cents per copy.

It was a single sheet paper, three pages containing patent medicine advertisements, and the fourth was made up of local items, in brevity-type, with plenty of spaces between paragraphs.

Among other things the paper contained, was an advertisement, viz:—

"WANTED."

"A young man, as general clerk in my bank. Must be a thorough accountant, an expert judge of money, of pleasing manners and address, and come well recommended. Good salary to capable party. Apply at once to

"PHILANDER PORTER."

A young man, sitting on the piazza of the Elephant Hotel, perused the advertisement, several times.

He had arrived but an hour before the paper was seen upon the street, and had registered as "John L. Sullivan."

"That name is as good as any," he added to the office clerk, "and a still tongue sustains a brain of wisdom."

The clerk nodded, and smiled.

He had cut his eye-teeth in New York's world, famous Bowery, and flattered himself he could read a countenance, as soon as he saw it.

When Mr. John L. Sullivan read the advertisement in the *Beelzebub Bull's-Eye*, several times, he arose, entered the hotel, and viewed himself in the large mirror behind the bar, as he drank a Rocky Mountain punch—the mirror by the way, being, thus far, the only one in the camp—a luxury always appreciated and taken advantage of, by that class of citizens, who "wanted to see how they looked."

As he "looked," in the glass, he was a stylishly attired young man of twenty-six or eight, with a rather attractive cast of features, brilliant eyes, and a tawny, well-trained mustache.

In figure he was of medium height, yet muscularly proportioned, and firm footed.

He carried a gold-headed cane, wore a magnificent diamond scarf-pin, and, as a whole, looked the least like a man who was financially embarrassed. The reader, however, will recognize him as an old acquaintance, and none other than the redoubtable Deadwood Dick.

After surveying himself in the mirror, he put on a pair of green goggles, which materially altered his appearance, and then made his way out of doors.

He had already learned the location of Philander Porter's residence, and it being after banking hours, he naturally concluded that the old gentleman could be found at his house, which was the most pretentious edifice in Beelzebub.

On his arrival there, Dick rapped upon the door, and the summons was answered by a colored man, the only one of his race, by the way, in the young city.

"Is Mr. Porter in?" asked Dick, bowing.

"Yes, sah!"

"Go tell him, then, that a gentleman has called in answer to his advertisement."

"Walk right in, sah. De boss is in de parlor, sah."

So Dick was ushered into the front apartment of the house, where he found a comfortable array of furniture and ornaments, and an elderly man seated in an arm-chair.

Philander Porter was sixty or over, and corpulent of figure. His face, however, looked rather thin and haggard, and his eyes sunken, as if some disease was gnawing at his vitals. His head was bald, and his mustache was frosted with gray.

To study his face, he did not look like a man who would be guilty of any intentional villainy; at least so it occurred to our hero.

"You are Mr. Porter, I believe!" Dick said, advancing and helping himself to a chair.

"I am, sir; and you—?"

"My 'handle' is Paul Primrose. I am newly arrived in your city, and seeing your advertisement, make haste to call in answer to it."

Philander Porter looked over his gold-rimmed spectacles at his visitor, inquiringly:

"Primrose, eh?" he echoed. "Where from?"

"Dakota, originally, though for several years I have been drifting about with the various mining excitements."

"Humph! Got any recommends?"

"None that are local. If, however, you will take the trouble to write to the Governor of Nevada, he will only be too glad to vouch for me every time."

"Indeed? Have you ever clerked in a bank before?"

"No. But I feel confident that I can fill all your requirements and give satisfaction."

"Have you defective sight?"

"Oh! no. I wear the goggles to protect my eyes from dust and sun."

Philander Porter touched a call bell on a small table at his left and a moment later a young lady entered from an adjoining room.

Deadwood Dick had Joan's picture indelibly engraved upon his mind, and he started slightly as he beheld the vision of loveliness the banker had summoned.

She was very much like the picture Dick carried in his pocket, except that she looked older, and wore her hair arranged somewhat differently. She was a strikingly beautiful girl, both in face and form, and Dick found it hard to believe that she was not the original of his picture.

"Mr. Primrose, this is my daughter, Joan!" the banker introduced—"Joan, Mr. Primrose, my new clerk."

Dick arose and bowed as he touched the wax-like hand Joan frankly extended.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Primrose!" she said, in a musical voice. Then, to the banker, "Did you wish anything, papa?"

"Yes, dear. Where is Lord Lindsay?"

"He is not in, papa. He went out for a stroll, I believe."

"Ah! I wished to make him and Mr. Primrose acquainted. That's all, dear. You can have an extra plate set for Mr. Primrose at supper, dear."

Joan bowed, smiled at Dick, and flitted out of the room like some fairy.

The banker then turned to the new clerk.

"You can begin your new duties to-morrow, Primrose. Of course you will not find them arduous, but you will need to keep your eyes open, for there's all kind of roguery going on nowadays."

"You can depend upon it that I shall be wide awake to your interests, sir," Dick replied.

"That's all I want. The banking business is not rushing, but I am a sufferer from great bodily debility and find it tedious to attend to the duties myself. So I am forced to employ a clerk, and I trust you are the man I want. Your salary will be fifty dollars a week, and you are welcome to the hospitality of my home, free of expense. And now, I guess that is all until banking hours to-morrow."

"Very well, sir. I will improve the remainder of the day in looking over the camp. By the way, I presume you have proper medical attendance?"

"Well, yes—that is, as good as can be got here. I had my Carson City doctor send one of his advanced students here to attend to me. His name is Dr. Jacquett. You may possibly meet him."

After a few more words, Dick took his departure.

"The solution is no nearer at hand than before, as I can see," he muttered. "I have at least gained one point by getting into Porter's employ!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

SEVERAL days passed by.

Deadwood Dick, in his *alias* of Paul Primrose, became duly installed as clerk, at the Porter Bank, and, after the first day, took full charge of the business as though he had been identified with the banking and exchange, all his life.

By a persistent practice of wearing the goggles he effectually disguised his identity. He saw Herbert Halsey several times, and also Jerry June, both of whom he had met at Applejack City, but neither of the twain appeared to recognize him.

At Porter's request he made his home at the Porter residence, and, accordingly, was thrown into the society of the family, which consisted of the banker, Joan, and her lover, Lord Lindsay.

His first week in town was characterized by but a few discoveries, although Dick was constantly on the lookout for points.

Among things that he did learn, were the following.

That Herbert Halsey and Jerry June were partners and bosom friends, in the gaming business, which appeared to be their only occupation, and that Halsey was an admirer of Joan Porter, although not apparently a favored one.

That the Porters were originally from Surrey, England, and that, through claiming to be a scion of a noble British family, Lord Lindsay had introduced himself to them, but recently, and won a familiarity that resulted in his becoming their guest.

He was a well-built young man, with rather a darkly good-looking face, a curling mustache, sharp black eyes, and close curling hair.

It struck Dick that his nose was 'most too prominent for the Anglo-Saxon race; but Lindsay had the peculiar drawl, and the occasional "h" added to his speech, that identified him with the native products of British soil.

He dressed elegantly, his manners were polished and refined, and he appeared to have ingratiated himself firmly into the good graces of the Porter family.

He paid little or no attention to the bank clerk, a fact that Dick was heartily glad of, for it gave him a better opportunity to study his lordship, for whom he had acquired a positive and suspicious dislike.

Dick watched Joan, too, very keenly, but could discover nothing to disprove the idea that she was Porter's own child. She appeared perfectly at home, and self-possessed, and, more than all, appeared to love the old folks with all a daughter's tender devotion. Hence Dick could come to but one conclusion. If she was playing a part, she was playing it with unequalled skill, and care.

Dick had made an attempt to find the man, Mart Murdock, whom Dr. Darkley had mentioned, but without success. So far as he could ascertain, there was no such a man in the camp as Mart Murdock.

Jean Jacquett, however, the disguised clerk easily spotted, and he was not long in forming the conclusion that Jacquett, who was Philander Porter's medical attendant, was the very man who had conversed with Darkley, in the Carson City saloon.

And so it stood that Dick had lived a week in Beelzebub without forming any definite plan of action.

The case was so puzzling to him, that really he did not know what further course to pursue.

Several times he was tempted to open the sealed package he had received from Bill Bird, but remembering that Bird had expressly enjoined that the package should not be opened until the real Joan Porter was found, he left it intact.

Finally, one evening, he decided upon a plan of action. He would, in disguise, have an interview with the banker, and see what more he could learn.

He left the camp about dusk, but in an hour returned, perfectly disguised, in every respect.

He wore a full but carefully trimmed beard, and appeared as a person of some forty years of age.

He went direct to the Porter residence, and sent in a card, by the servant, upon which, in a disguised hand, was written:

"C. GRAY,
"PINKERTON'S Detectives,
"Chicago."

After some delay, the darky came back, and ordered the caller to follow him, and he was shown into the parlor, where the banker was seated, at a table, engaged in reading.

He arose, however, with a bow, and handed the visitor a seat, which the detective accepted, with thanks.

"Did you wish to see me, Mr. Gray?" the banker inquired, as he turned the light a little higher, and reseated himself.

"Yes, sir!" Dick responded, promptly, but in a disguised voice. "I came to institute a few inquiries relative to a case that has been placed in my hands!"

"Ah! Well, what is it you wish to know?"

"I will endeavor to explain, as I interrogate. Did you ever know a man named William Bird?"

"I did."

"Where did your acquaintance first begin?"

"In Carson City. I, however, once knew his father, in England."

"What sort of a fellow was this Bird?"

"William Bird, the son?"

"Exactly!"

"A worthless sort of a man, who pretended to be a scout, but seldom did anything in that line."

"Did he court your daughter?"

"He made an attempt to, but I nipped that little game in the bud, by clearing him out!"

"He then disappeared?"

"Yes."

"What became of him?"

"I do not know."

"After an absence of nine months, he returned?"

"He did."

"I believe he found a fortune awaiting him?"

"So I have heard, although I am in no wise positive about it!"

"Did he call on you?"

"I sent for him. News had it that he was bragging that he'd marry my daughter in spite of me, and I wished to disabuse him of his idea."

"He called?"

"He did."

"What came of the interview?"

"Nothing. When he saw my daughter, he at once made the insane declaration that she was not my daughter—not the same one he had known. He insisted that the Joan he had known had been spirited away, and another girl in-

stalled in her place—all of which was done, said he, to prevent him from marrying her."

"Well?"

"We tried to disabuse him of the idea—all of us—but he would listen to nothing we could say, and finally became so violently angry and abusive, that I ordered him out of the house. We have never seen him, since."

The detective was silent a moment.

"Did Bird put any questions to your daughter that confused her, and she could not answer?" he finally asked.

"He did not."

"This daughter—has she been absent from home, in the past two years?"

"Not a day."

"Then, naturally, you must be positive that she is the same one whom Bird was engaged to."

"The same, most assuredly. Why, the idea of a change is preposterous! Besides all that, the two were not engaged."

"Ah! They were not, eh? Was no plan made to elope?"

"Certainly not."

"I am informed that they were to elope, on a certain night, but when that night came, Bird was assaulted, knocked insensible, and taken to an outlaw camp, where he was held a close prisoner for nine months, when he made his escape."

"I don't believe a word of it—not a word, sir. In my opinion, the fellow was crazy. Were you employed by him?"

"I was."

"What for?"

"To find the real Joan Porter."

"Well, sir, then allow me to inform you that you are on a fool's errand."

"Maybe. I am not sure of it, however. I fancy, with Bird, that a change of girls was made. Whether you were cognizant of the abduction and substitution, or not, I cannot say. But, I do know that there is in existence a package of sealed instructions that will make a revelation when a real Joan is found, and that one or more persons are anxious to secure these papers."

"Who? who?" the banker demanded.

"For one, a Mr. Herbert Halsey!"

"The deuce!"

"No, Herbert Halsey. For another, one Doctor Darkley, of Carson City."

"Darkley?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Never heard of such a man."

"Who is your physician?"

"Doctor Bardwell."

"Have you any near relatives living, Mr. Porter?"

"Possibly one."

"A brother?"

"Yes—but I have no idea that he is living, yet. He ran away, when I was young, and became a Caribbean pirate. I haven't heard of him in twenty years, and no doubt he is dead."

"You came from England, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Have you any interests there, now?"

The banker slammed his book shut, and looked at his interrogator sharply.

"What matters that to you?" he demanded, surlily.

"Not much, sir, except this: I am a detective, and as such have become interested in what I consider a very mysterious case. There's a villainous bottom somewhere, and I propose to keep on sounding until I find it. I am aware that one man at least is anticipating your early death."

"What!"

The banker looked astounded.

"Exactly as I tell you. A man is anticipating your death, and it can't occur too soon to suit him. Indeed, I am of the belief that he is causing it to be hastened."

"In God's name, who is he?"

"Doctor Darkley, of Carson City. If my conclusions are not wrong, he knows the girl you call your daughter."

The banker remained silent a moment, his gaze bent upon the floor.

"This is all a mystery to me. You must give me time to ponder. I know not what it means. Come! you must go, now—go, and come here two nights hence. I must have time to ponder!"

He buried his face in his hands, and remained silent.

Considering himself dismissed, Dick arose and took his departure.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HUMAN RAFFLE.

THE evening stage had just arrived in Beelzebub, when Dick left the Porter dwelling, and

made his way to the Elephant Hotel, where the mail was distributed.

In the rear of the hotel he removed all of his disguise, and then, after the crowd had to some extent dispersed, made inquiry at the hotel-office for a letter.

Sure enough he got one, and a glance at the superscription told him that it was from Calamity Jane.

It came from a little mining-camp ten miles from Beelzebub, known as Goldburg, and the contents were as follows:

"DEAR HUSBAND:—

"I write this in haste to let you know that something has happened, and something more is going to happen, which I think will have a bearing on the case we have in hand, viz:

"I arrived here yesterday from Carson City, just two hours behind Doc Darkley, whom I have spotted vigilantly, since you left. The doctor has quit Carson for good. I reckon, and is liable to hang out here for the present. This afternoon he had a consultation with a dark Spanish-looking fellow who came from Beelzebub, and returned there on horseback. I reckon he's the Jacquet you wrote about."

"A little while ago a big, ferocious-looking ruffian whom they call Fang-Tooth Jim, came into town, from up the mountain, and posted a notice in the Miner's Rest, a copy of which I inclose. The notice hadn't been up five minutes when Darkley came in, saw it, and made an attempt to pull it down. Fang-Tooth Jim pitched onto him then, and they had a rough-and-tumble fight."

"It was a tough one, and both men 'peared to know each other. Fang-Tooth finally got the upper hand, and pitched Darkley clear into the street. The fall nearly broke the doctor's neck, but he got up, mounted a horse, and rode out o' town like a streak. I heard a miner allow there'd be more out of it. Fang-Tooth has just gone up the mountain as I write. He promises to be back, as per notice. Come as soon as you get this, if you have to ride a streak of lightning. I feel impressed that the girl may be the one we want."

"Your Wife-Defective-Pard."

"CALAMITY JANE."

The notice which she had inclosed had been copied from the original by her, and was as follows:

"BIG BANG-UP TIME!"

"TO-NIGHT!"

"TO-NIGHT!"

"At the Miner's Rest, Fang-Tooth Jim, the howlin' hero from Hell's Delight, will raffle of a pritty gal, aged eighteen, at \$50 a chance, ter pay him fer expense o' board an' storage. This gal is gentle as a kat, an' willin' ter be raffled fer. Who wins her gits a bill o' sale, an' she's his property. \$50 a chance wins a gal fer ther lucky man. Ther raffle will begin at ten o'clock, sharp."

"Come one! Come all!"

"FANG-TOOTH JIM,

"Perprieter."

Deadwood Dick could scarcely control his excitement, as he read the notice.

"There's an impending break in the cloud of mystery at last!" he muttered, grimly. "This girl may or may not be the real Joan, but that she's in some way connected with the mystery that surrounds the case, seems plain enough to me. If not, why should Darkley attempt to tear down the notice, as Calamity writes? Humph! I shouldn't wonder if I would go to Goldburg."

It was already after eight o'clock. Ten miles was the distance to Goldburg, and the stage-road was none of the best.

So the prince of Western detectives lost no time in hiring as fleet-footed a horse as was available, and was soon in the saddle, and en route, at breakneck speed.

Once out of the town, he donned that part of the disguise which he had removed, after leaving Porter's house, and was thus in no danger of being recognized at Goldburg, except by Calamity.

On! on! on! he dashed, the trees and rocks seeming to fly past him as though running a race with a locomotive.

The horse he bestrode was one of good wind and thorough mettle, and he rode in to Goldburg about half-past nine, having been but little more than an hour on the road.

Goldburg was but a quiet, humdrum sort of mining-camp, a good share of whose original population had stampeded into Beelzebub.

There appeared to be no visible commotion as Dick rode up to the Miner's Rest, and when he entered the big bar-room, he found but few people present.

Fang-Tooth Jim's proclamation was still nailed to the wall, but excited no attention.

In one corner of the room, was a small stage. It had been erected in former days, when it was expected that Goldburg would grow to be a city, and had not since been removed.

Occupying a chair on the stage, was the girl who was to be raffled for.

Deadwood Dick could scarcely suppress a cry of astonishment, at sight of her, for she was the

very counterpart of the Joan Porter he had met in Beelzebub!

He gazed at her studiously, for several minutes, and could detect no feature or particular about the one, that was not an exact counterpart of the other—excepting attire.

The girl on the stage was plainly clad; despite this fact, however, her hair was becomingly arranged, she wore a bunch of wild flowers at her throat, and was charmingly pretty.

Her custodian, Fang-Tooth Jim, was not in the room, and so, after some deliberation, Dick approached her, raising his hat politely.

"You will please excuse my presumption, young lady," he said, his tone low enough so as not to reach other ears, "but, may I ask if you are to be raffled off, by your own free will?"

"I am!" was the calm reply. "Fang-Tooth wants money, and I want liberation from his custody. No matter into whose power I fall. I could not be in worse hands than I am, now."

"What is your name?"

If she answered, Deadwood Dick did not hear her—for he was suddenly seized by a powerful grasp from behind, and hurled half-way across the stage. He did not lose his footing nor fall, however, and instantly turned to see who his assailant was, and found himself confronted by an individual who he concluded, was Fang-Tooth Jim—a "seven-footer," of ponderous development, roughly clad, armed to the teeth, and the possessor of the ugliest, most repulsive and brutal face that Deadwood Dick had seen for many a day.

"Ho! ho! So I caught ye at et, did I?" the ruffian roared, glaring at Dick ferociously. "Yer tho't ye hed a mash on me gal, did yer?"

"You are mistaken!" Dick replied, trying hard to restrain his rising anger. "I simply asked the young lady her name."

"Yas, I know yer did—I heered ye. An' now, ye leetle p'izen plum, afore I knock yer head off jest spit out what bizness you hed to speak to the gal!"

"Because I took a notion to, you overgrown jack-rabbit!" was the hot retort.

"Jack-rabbit, am I, cuss yer? Jack-rab—"

He didn't finish the sentence, but leaped toward the detective with a vengeful oath, as if it was his intention to annihilate him.

But Dick was not being annihilated, just then.

He grappled with the giant, caught him by a back hold, and whopped the huge form dexterously over his head, causing Fang-Tooth to land heavily on the broad of his back, on the floor.

Dick's boot was pressing heavily upon the giant's throat, in another instant, and a pair of cocked five-shooters were in his grasp—a deadly gleam in his eye.

"Lay there!" he ordered, sternly, "or I'll fill your carcass so full of holes that it would answer for a sieve. So you're sp'illin' for a fight, and took me for your victim, did you? Well, I'm sorry to inform you that you got left. I'm fond o' pettin' sech tigers as you, and if you don't cave and beg, I'll add you to Goldburg's Cemetery Improvement Company. Out with it—d'ye cave, or shall I perforate ye?"

"I cave! I cave! Let me up!" Fang-Tooth gasped, as Dick's boot pressed harder upon his throat and began to shut off his wind. "Call et squar'—let up on me thru't!"

Dick removed his foot and the giant scrambled up hastily, but made no effort to renew hostilities. He simply glanced Dick over from head to foot, then turned on his heel and walked toward the front of the platform where he stationed himself, as if to prevent any one else from speaking to the girl.

Dick sauntered about the room, the object of many curious glances—for, truly a man who could so easily conquer a savage and gigantic ruffian like Fang-Tooth Jim, was worth noticing.

There was only one person in the room whom he recognized, and that was Herbert Halsey.

He was imbibing freely of bug-juice at the bar, and if he saw Dick, or knew him, did not indicate it.

Search where he would Dick could not find Calamity Jane. If she were present at all, she was too cleverly disguised for detection.

After looking over the crowd which had now assembled, narrowly, Dick became satisfied that she was not present—a thing, too, he wondered at greatly.

At prompt ten o'clock, Fang-Tooth Jim mounted the stage, and began to address those present.

"Feller-citizens!" he said, "ye behold before yer Fang-Tooth Jim, ther howlin' hero o' Hell's Delight, who hes licked an' killed more two-

fatted galoots then any other man in America. This hyer gal's my 'dopted darter, an me an' her hev concluded to dissolve partnership, an' go et alone. So, as I'm wantin' money fer ter lay in a winter stock ov bug-juice, an' she's got a notion she'd like ter gallop alongside o' some colt thet's younger an' purtier than me, I've concluded to raffle her off, fer fifty dollars a chance, an' whoever wins her gits her. So walk up now, gents, an' buy your tickets at fifty each. Et's a bony-fide affair, and every holder of a ticket hes a chance!"

Fifty-dollar notes were not floating around Goldburg with the promiscuous freedom of autumn leaves; consequently but few of those present invested in tickets.

When all had bought who were apparently going to buy, Herbert Halsey stepped up and purchased four chances, an act that caused Fang-Tooth Jim to grin with approbation.

"Hurra! that's right!" That's ther way, buy four or five in a lump an' you'll have a better chance to win!" he cried, pocketing the cash. "Who wants another lot?"

"You may give me twenty!" Deadwood Dick said, stepping forward and laying down a thousand dollars.

And he received the tickets amid a murmur of astonishment from the crowd.

Halsey scowled but purchased no more.

As there appeared to be no one else who wished to run the risk of losing fifty dollars, the raffle, or throwing was begun.

Deadwood Dick's turn did not come till last, and so he paid but little attention to the first throwers, presuming that the storekeeper, who was proprietor of the place and an honest-looking fellow, would keep a straight account of the throwing. So the detective sauntered about the room smoking a cigar and wondering, should he win the gal, what would he do with her.

A touch upon the arm arrested his attention, and turning he beheld a sprucely-dressed person, with fair skin, short curly hair and a black mustache.

It was Calamity, although he would not have recognized her but for her beaming eyes—eyes into whose depth he never gazed without experiencing a thrill.

"Have you seen her?" she asked, with a nod toward the stage.

"Yes. She is the very picture of Joan Porter of Beelzebub!"

"Ah! then I was right in sending for you?" And Calamity Jane's face lit up with a pleasant look.

"Certainly. I would not have missed being here for a deal of money."

"Have you learned her name?"

"Not yet."

"Do you think she is the real Joan Porter, and the other an impostor?"

"I am not prepared to make as strong an opinion as that just yet. The girl at Beelzebub is a perfect little lady and though I have observed her closely, I have yet to detect the first thing about her actions to prove that she is not what is claimed for her. Her father believes Bill Bird was crazy."

"And you?"

"I don't know what to think. But, for *this* girl, I should be inclined to the same opinion myself."

"Are you in the raffle?"

"Yes, I come in last with twenty chances, which is sixteen more than any of the rest have got."

"Then you expect to win?"

"If my old luck don't desert me—yes," and Dick smiled confidently.

"I hope you will," Calamity said, earnestly.

"We have got so far on the trail that we ought not to give up until we solve the mystery. Have you found no trace or tidings of the diamonds yet?"

"No. There is a clothing merchant in Beelzebub—an old Jew, by the way, named Isaac Levi—and I've kept an eye on his place in case the Applejack Levi should be his son and so come home. I've made no discoveries, however."

"We may never find the diamonds."

"True; but if we hold on to the twenty thousand, we are no longer poor. Has Doctor Darkley made his reappearance since he left the town?"

"No. I wanted to speak about that. I thought at first that he would be back to the raffle. But, as he has not come, I've got another idea."

"Let's have it."

"Well, it's this," and Calamity looked cautiously around to see that no one was within ear-shot: "It was apparent to me to-day that

Fang-Tooth Jim and Doc Darkley knew each other, and it is now my belief that it was Darkley who originally placed yonder girl in Fang-Tooth's custody."

"Quite possible," Dick assented, thoughtfully.

"Well, as Darkley has not showed up here to-night, it's flat he's afraid of the giant. But that does not signify that he's going to give up the girl. He may have a spy here now. I believe he's got a band of allies somewhere in the vicinity of the town, and they mean to get the girl from whoever wins her."

"Another good guess," Dick said. "They'll not get her from me, however, if I win her. There are more trails than one from here to Beelzebub, and they can't well watch them all!"

"Next to last man!" rung out the scorekeeper's voice, just then.

"I shall have to go, to be ready for my turn,"

Dick said, as he left Calamity's side and walked over to the big deal table, where the throwing of the dice was taking place.

Herbert Halsey had the box, and was just throwing off his second chance.

In his first throw, he had scored forty-eight. None of the others had reached over forty-five!

CHAPTER X.

HEDGED IN.

"My Christian friend, you will observe that forty-eight is a pretty decent throw," Halsey remarked, as Deadwood Dick approached the table.

"Oh, tolerably fair!" Dick returned, dryly. "I have seen it beaten—have often beaten it myself."

"Well, when I'm done throwing, I'll gamble on it *you* can't beat the count I'll make!" was the challenge.

"I don't mind losing a few dollars, so I'll have to bet you," Dick responded, with bland assurance. "How much do you care to invest?"

"A hundred!"

"It's a go. Put up!" and the prince of Western detectives laid two fifties in the scorekeeper's hands.

Halsey covered it, and then threw off his second chance—eighteen, seventeen and fifteen—a total of fifty!

A big throw, which stands a chance of winning eighty-three times out of a hundred.

"That's pretty good," Dick assented, as Halsey stepped aside with an air of triumph.

"You may bet it's good!" Halsey cried. "If I had a million dollars I'd wager that the girl is mine!"

"You'd lose it," Dick declared. "Although I purchased twenty chances, I've no idea it will need half of them to win the girl. The box, please."

He was handed the box.

A hush of expectancy at once prevailed in the room. Everybody who could crowd around the table did so, to watch the result.

Fang-Tooth Jim, alone, was moistening his throat, at the bar.

In his first shake, Dick threw forty-nine, beating Halsey by one point, on *his* first chance, and eliciting an oath from the gambler.

In his second chance, Dick shook the dice thoughtfully, and cast them, each time bringing up three sixes, making for him a total of fifty-four, the highest possible throw in the box!

A ringing cheer arose, as the result became known, and the score-keeper at once handed Dick the wager money.

"You won fairly!" Halsey admitted, gruffly, "and that settles it!"

"Young lady!" Dick said, advancing to the stage, "I have had the luck to win you, and we will accordingly set out for Beelzebub, as soon as I can hire a couple of horses. When we reach our destination, you will be cared for the same as though you were my sister."

The girl bowed, and gave him a grateful look.

"If you're going to Beelzebub, that's my destination, and I'll make one of your party, providing you have no objections!" Halsey remarked, stepping forward.

At first Dick was tempted to tell him his company was not wanted, but, on second thought, he said:

"Very well. Get your horse, as we will start without delay!"

Halsey bowed, and walked away, and bending over his new charge, Dick spoke to her:

"Answer no questions that man may ask you. He is not to be trusted."

He then called Calamity aside for conference.

"Are you not afraid of being intercepted, in trying to return to-night?"

"No, not afraid, so far as that is concerned. Are you going along?"

"No. I want to remain here, until to-morrow; then, I will come on to Beelzebub."

"Very well. Keep your eye on our prize, until I get an extra horse."

He succeeded in hiring a horse, and, in short order, he and the girl and Halsey, were mounted, and riding out of Goldburg.

It was a beautiful, balmy night, the air being redolent with the scent of forest and flowers, while the full moon soared like a huge silver ball through space. So brilliant was the light, indeed, that all objects were outlined with startling distinctness.

The trio, after leaving Goldburg, galloped along without speaking, for a distance of several miles.

Dick kept his eyes sharply about him, in anticipation of an ambush, but, full half of the journey was accomplished, without a sign of an enemy.

They were doing the sixth mile, at a leisurely canter, when, on looking behind him, Halsey cried out, in alarm:

"Look! look! We are pursued!"

Dick did look, and saw a body of six or eight horsemen swooping down in their rear.

They were yet so far away that no noise of their horses feet could be heard; but they were coming at full tilt and the polished barrels of their weapons glistened in the moonlight.

"Yes, we are pursued!" Dick declared, grimly, "but we are not captured. Can you keep to your saddle, if we ride fast?"—this to his *protegee*.

"I can try!" was the courageous answer.

"All right. Do not get scared, and we will show 'em our heels, yet!"

He seized the bridle-rein of her horse, near the bits, and spurred both animals into a run, with a yell of defiance.

The animals seemed to know what was expected of them, for they shot forward like a streak, leaving Halsey to bring up the rear.

By dint of spurring, Dick kept the horses flying over the trail at a breakneck speed, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing that the distance between him and the pursuers was rapidly widening.

The trail now lay in nearly a straight line, to Beelzebub, and was less rough and dangerous than that portion over which they had just passed.

Although he spurred and belabored his horse furiously, Halsey was falling rapidly behind, and was in imminent danger of being overtaken, before he could reach Beelzebub.

"Hold up! hold up! Wait for me!" he yelled, at the top of his voice.

"You go to grass!" Deadwood Dick shouted back, he having by no means forgotten the shabby trick Halsey had served him in Applejack City. "If you don't want to get left, hurry up!"

Very consoling advice, truly!

"Cuss the luck, my horse can't go any faster!" Halsey fairly howled. "If you don't wait for me, I'll shoot you!"

Dick looked back, and saw that the man had drawn a six-shooter, and probably meant to use it.

The distance between them was now so great, however, that there was little danger of Halsey's hitting his mark, or of the bullet doing much harm, even if it reached them; so Dick laughed, mockingly:

"Pepper away, Pater!" he sung out. "I'm a good catcher at base-ball if you only pitch them right!"

Halsey at once opened fire, emptying one chamber after another, of his weapon, in rapid succession.

The bullets zipped past the detective and his charge, like bees, but not one took effect.

Fortunately, Halsey had but one revolver, and having no extra cartridges with him, he was now defenseless, with the pursuers bearing down upon him.

Dick continued to urge on his horses, and the ground they covered brought them nearer and nearer to the mining-camp, which could now be distinguished, away ahead, through the brilliant moonlight.

"Oh! we'll get away from 'em easy enough!" Dick assured, as he saw his *protegee* look back, anxiously. "Two more miles will bring us to our destination."

"I hope so," was the reply, "but I was not looking at that, but at the man who came with us!"

Dick looked back, and saw, much to his surprise, that Halsey had turned his horse about, and was riding toward the on-coming pursuers!

"The traitor!" burst from Dick's lips. "He sees he will be overtaken, and means to side with

the enemy, if he can. But wait! the time will yet come, when I can get square with him!"

He then turned suddenly to his girl companion:

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Joan Porter, sir. My parents live in Carson City, from where I was kidnapped, taken to the mountains, and placed in the hands of Fang-Tooth Jim!"

She spoke candidly, and did not flinch beneath his searching scrutiny.

He compressed his lips, and urged on the horses.

He was no nearer a solution of the mystery, apparently, than when he had first taken hold of the case.

On! on! he urged the now foam-flecked steeds. They were fast losing wind, and were not gaining ground.

But, the same could be said of the pursuers.

Dick knew if he could keep his steeds at a run for two miles more they would be safe in the young mining city; but could he?

Halsey had been met by the pursuers, and had disappeared from view, in their midst.

Seeing that Beelzebub was not far away, the pursuers were urging their horses to their utmost speed, and their vengeful yells grew more and more distinct.

"Yell on, blame you, till you burst your throats, for all the good it will do you!" Dick cried. "I'll reach Beelzebub, or—"

He did not finish the sentence, but a cry of exasperation burst from his lips.

Five hundred yards ahead, a line of horsemen had suddenly wheeled out across the road—half a score of them, all told, armed with rifles, which were leveled at Dick and Joan!

The enemy were in front—the enemy were behind, and Dick at once saw that he could neither advance or retreat, without running a risk of being shot down; so, with a growl of vexation, he reined in his horse and that of Joan, and awaited developments.

The outlook was hardly what could be termed appetizing.

"Merciful Heaven! what will become of us, now?" Joan asked, in alarm.

"Keep mum, and we will see!" was the detective's reply.

CHAPTER XI.

CALAMITY TO THE RESCUE.

As soon as Dick drew rein, the horsemen in front advanced, slowly, until they were but a few yards away, when they came to a halt, evidently awaiting for the other party to come up, in the rear.

Every man was roughly clad, armed to the teeth, and wore a full cloth mask.

Deadwood Dick surveyed them, coolly, his eyes scintillating like diamonds.

"Well, pilgrims, what appears to be the difficulty?" he demanded in a ringing voice. "Is this a division of the United States army, I behold, or are you galoots going to a masquerade ball?"

"I reckon you'll find out we're goin' to attend a lynch pic-nic—a neck-tie soiree, when the capt'in comes!" one of the gang responded, with a brutal laugh.

"Then, the captain is not with you?"

"No—he's with the rear gang."

In a few minutes more, the pursuing party came dashing up, and Deadwood Dick wheeled his horse around, facing them.

"Ha! ha!" cried one of the men, who was in the lead, and was evidently the captain. "So you had all your ride for nothing, didn't you, Mr. Deadwood Richard?"

"I allow you rode about the same distance I did, Doctor Darkley!" Dick retorted, coolly.

The captain started, and uttered an oath.

"That's not my name!" he growled.

"Ain't it? Oh! I thought it was!" and Dick smiled, sarcastically.

"But it ain't, I'm Cap Cowboy, the outlaw, if you want to know it, and I'm the boss o' these 'ere boys who foller me. I owe you a grudge, and I'm goin' to hev it out. You've slipped through Judge Lynch's noose a good many times, but you ain't goin' to do it again. We'll fit a collar around your neck, this time, that'll make ye look like a high water dude when ye'r' jammin' air wi' yer feet!"

"You don't say so!"

"But we do tho'! We're goin' ter hev ther honor o' extinguishin' yer eternal candle, you bet! We're goin' ter head-quarters, now, and you an' the gal aire ter foller, 'twixt the two lines. Ef ye try to escape, the boys in yer rear will riddle ye!"

The order was then given to face about, and those who had been pursuers, rode back in the

direction of Goldburg. Nothing was left for Dick and Joan to do, but to follow suit, and the ten outlaws who had blocked the way, brought up the rear, close after them.

The route lay along the Goldburg trail, until they were within four miles of that camp, then branched off through a transverse canyon, to the northward, and gradually wound around and ascended the mountains, until an altitude of several hundred feet above Goldburg, had been attained.

Here, in a wood-surrounded glen, was clustered half a dozen rude log cabins, built, in a semicircle, at the edge of a level plaza, upon which a general dismount was made, it evidently being the rendezvous of Cap Cowboy's gang.

Deadwood Dick was forced to dismount, and was bound hand and foot. He was then carried to one of the cabins, which had but one door, and no windows, and here he was locked in.

What would be Joan's fate he had no means of knowing, for she had not yet dismounted when he was shut up in the cabin.

Whether she would be kept in the brigand camp or not was hard to surmise.

Dick's weapons had been seized by the outlaws who bound him, but the contents of his pockets had not been disturbed, which he considered a very fortunate occurrence, for the papers he had received from Bill Bird were in an inside pocket of his vest, and also the photograph.

Dick had been roughly pitched into the cabin, and the door slammed shut and locked, without any regard as to whether his neck had been broken in his fall or not.

He had sustained no injury, however, although he struck the ground with considerable force—there was no other flooring to the cabin—and when he gained a sitting posture, he found, to his joy, that the thongs about his wrists had become loosened.

By a little working, he succeeded in getting his hands free, after which it cost him but a little time to remove the lariat that bound his feet, and he was free, so far as the interior of the cabin was concerned.

Listening, he concluded that the outlaws had retired from the immediate vicinity of the door.

Satisfied on this point, he produced some matches from his pocket, and lighting them one by one explored his quarters.

He had not much to learn.

The cabin was a one-roomed affair, stoutly put together, the roof being fully six feet above Dick's head. There were no windows and the door was far too stout to break down. The only floor, as before stated, was the earth itself, which was of a sandy nature.

There was no furniture whatever in the place.

"Well, I am shot if this is a very comfortable jail," Dick muttered, "but, matters might be worse. I've free use of both hands and feet, and it is quite possible I may not become the victim of Cap Cowboy's neck-tie party, after all. Ha! ha! that's a pretty good name for Doctor Darkley, but he didn't deceive me; I knew his voice the moment he spoke."

As there was nothing he could do but await developments, he threw himself once more upon the ground, in a half-reclining position, and gave himself up to reflection.

As a natural consequence, his thoughts reverted to the girl whom he had won at the raffle, and who had unhesitatingly announced herself as Joan Porter.

"Is she Joan Porter, or is she an impostor? That's the question," he mused. "There's more crooked work than mystery about this matter, I fancy. This Joan appears genuinely candid in her assertion, yet the other one fits the position of daughter to the Porters as perfectly as though she had occupied it all her life. So, which is which?"

"This Doctor Darkley is a villain, and Herbert Halsey is another, and both seem to have a finger in the pie. Of course they have an object, but what the dickens is it? Monetary gain or revenge?"

"Then, there's old Porter himself. He's a smooth-tongued old rooster, and I'm satisfied he is keeping something back. Perhaps at our next interview—but hold on! I seem to forget that I am a prisoner in Cap Cowboy's stronghold, and have been promised the privilege of doing a tight-rope act to-morrow—or, for that matter, at most any minute."

To-morrow, however, was evidently likely to be the time, for within an hour after the outlaws arrived at the rendezvous all became quiet, and Dick concluded that he had nothing more to expect or fear, until daybreak.

It was not his intention to go to sleep, but his

day and night exercise had fatigued him, and he finally dropped off fast asleep.

His next sensation was of some one gently shaking him.

He instantly aroused and sat up, but the darkness was too intense to see a foot before his face.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"Sh! I'll show you," was the cautious reply.

The next moment the slide of a dark-lantern shot aside and a stream of light illuminated the cabin.

Dick uttered an ejaculation of surprise as his gaze rested upon Calamity Jane, the same as he had seen her in Goldburg, except that she was covered with dirt.

"How in the world did you get in here?" he cried, in an undertone.

She smiled, oddly.

"Why, I was here every minute as soon as you were," she declared.

"How so?"

"Easy enough. I was a member of the gang that pursued you. I knew you was to be given a chase, and at a good deal of risk, I managed to make myself one of the pursuing party, without any one but myself being the wiser for it."

"Calamity, you're a trump! I see now why you did not want to accompany me to Beelzebub."

"Exactly. I doubted not but what you would be captured, and concluded I could serve you best by putting myself in a position to liberate you."

"But how did you get in here?"

"I dug in under the wall. The soil is light and sandy, and it did not take me long. Come! we have no time to lose, for it is near daylight, and it is planned to hang you at sunrise."

"Is the camp asleep?"

"Yes, or was a few minutes ago."

"And the girl—Joan!"

"She is not here. She didn't even dismount, but went away with the captain!"

"Where?"

"To Beelzebub, I suspect. In fact, I am sure of it."

"Then we must away, and follow the trail!" Dick said, grimly.

Another hour saw them miles from the ruffians' stronghold.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK AND JOAN GO WALKING.

On the day following, Dick, in his character of Paul Primrose, was once more seen behind the counter of the bank. True, he did not feel much like work, but considered it necessary to be still on duty.

Philander Porter came down to the bank shortly after it opened, but made no reference, of course, to the interview between himself and Detective Gray, from the fact that he had not the slightest idea that Gray and his trusted clerk were one and the same person.

He was looking even more haggard than usual, and his step was unsteady, as if from great bodily weakness.

He did not remain long at the bank, and on leaving, said he should not be in again until the morrow.

Dick was not sorry, for he had much on his mind, and did not care to be disturbed by superfluous talk.

Of course, during banking hours, he was powerless to do anything toward finding Doc Darkley or his captive; but, Calamity was in the camp, in disguise, and he knew she would keep a close watch, and no doubt accomplish as much as he could himself.

The day wore away, however, without any report from her, and he began to fear that, after all, Darkley had not brought the girl to Beelzebub.

About half an hour before the usual time for closing, Joan Porter came tripping into the room, looking as piquant and pretty as a May-blossom.

The moment he saw her, Dick formed a resolution, which he had been considering all day long.

He would seek an interview with her.

"I dropped in to see if you would be kind enough to change a ten-dollar note for me, Mr. Primrose?" she said, with a coquettish smile.

"With the greatest of pleasure, Miss Porter," and he handed her out the desired change.

"This is a very pleasant day."

"Delightful! I do so love these bright, breezy days! I'm off, now, for a ramble near the Rainbow Cascade. I hear there's such a magnificent lot of flowers up there."

"Indeed! I am a great admirer of flowers myself. I suppose you will have his lordship

along, to assist in bringing back the precious harvest?"

"No, indeed! and I'm almost afraid to go alone, there's so many wicked-looking men in the neighborhood, of late. Lord Lindsay is very much engaged, I believe, and—ha! ha! Such an odd-looking man it was that called to see him!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes. There was a rap on the door, and I answered it, and there stood a hook-nosed old Jew, with little peering eyes, and awfully shabbily dressed. He asked for Lindsay; I wanted to know his name, and he said Isaac Levi, or Levi Isaac, I forget which. So I called Lorne, and he and the Jew went over to the hotel together. I suppose I shall have to go flower-gathering alone."

"Not if you will accept of my protection and company, Miss Porter," Dick hastened to say. "It is nearly time to close the bank, and if I can be of service to you, command me."

"Why, I shall be delighted to have your company, to be sure!" Joan replied, with a pleased look. "I have a bit of shopping to do, and by the time I return, you will be ready to go."

"Exactly. I will close up at three, precisely."

With a smile of assent she took her departure. And Dick?

He paced the floor excitedly.

"I am going to speak to her about this matter," he muttered; "I am going to satisfy myself whether she is false or genuine. The more I see of her the more I become convinced that she really is the old man's daughter, and that some infernal plot is afoot to oust her from her rightful position."

"And this Lindsay, and the Jew? By Heaven, I believe Lindsay is an impostor—that he is the very pawnbroker of Applejack to whom Bill Bird pledged the diamonds! I wonder where Calamity is?"

The old adage that "the devil's always around when you are talking about him," did not fail in this case, for a few moments later Calamity entered the bank disguised as a miner, and so cleverly that even Dick did not recognize her until she spoke.

"Nothing new," she said, leaning against the counter. "If Darkley is in the camp he is under a new disguise, and as for the girl, I can find no trace of her, whatever."

"Well, keep your eyes peeled; and, in the mean time, there's something demanding your immediate attention. Isaac Levi—the one of Goldburg, I presume—has arrived in town, and sought an interview with the fellow I spoke to you about—Lord Lindsay. They are over at the Elephant now. Look after them sharp, and learn what you can without arousing suspicion. I believe we have a clew to the diamonds, at last!"

"I'll see!" and Calamity immediately took her departure.

It now being three o'clock, Dick closed the bank, and locked the massive door, when Joan came along, carrying a pretty hand-basket she evidently had just purchased.

"Just in time, am I not?" she said, merrily.

"Now, we will go and gather the flowers."

They sauntered leisurely out of the camp, to the southward, chatting as they went, and in the course of half an hour reached a point where a silvery sheet of water leaped down the mountain-side in cascades, and finally flowed over a ledge, far above them, and fell in a foaming basin at their feet, thence continuing down the gulch, in a gurgling stream.

The natural caldron, into which the water fell, was surrounded by a bed of flowers, of various species and hues—a sight most beautiful to look upon; while the air was redolent with perfume.

It did not take long to fill Joan's basket with the choicest of the blooms; then, while she sat upon the mossy bank, weaving a garland of brilliant hues, Dick was near at hand, leaning against a huge gray boulder, and knew his time had come to speak, if he spoke at all—to learn, if he learned, at all what he most desired to know.

"Miss Porter," he said, "were you ever acquainted with a man named Bill Bird?"

She looked up quickly, curiously, as if the question had surprised her.

"Why?" she asked—"are you Detective Gray?"

It was Dick's turn to be astonished now.

He knew denial would be useless, for she seemed to be reading his face, with her searching gaze.

"I am," he replied, after a moment, "and I infer that you must have overheard my interview with your father."

"I did. I was in the next room. Besides, papa told me all about it, afterward!"

"Ah! Well, then, I am the detective, and I have come to Beelzebub to ferret out the mystery of Joan Porter."

"You have, eh?" and she laughed, lightly. "So you think there is a mystery about me, do you?"

"Yes. But, you haven't answered me about this man, Bird."

"Yes, I know him."

"He was your lover?"

"Well, after a fashion. He let on he liked me, and I was more susceptible to flattery, then, than I am now."

"You were to elope, I believe?"

"Yes. Papa didn't know anything about that, however."

"I suppose you are not aware that Bird is dead?"

"No, sir!"

"Well, he is. He killed himself, in Applejack City, and left me to find the real Joan Porter!"

"I believe, with papa, that the poor fellow must have been crazy."

"What questions did he put to you, that confused you, when he visited you and declared that you were not the real Joan?"

"Only one or two. He asked me if I could name the places of our clandestine meetings, and where we were to go to, when we eloped. This was before papa and mamma, who knew nothing about all that, and I felt very much embarrassed, and declined to answer him. Undoubtedly that strengthened his belief that I was not the real Joan."

Dick listened, and watched her, searchingly, even the every expression of her lips, as the words left them.

If ever an angel looked innocent and truthful, she certainly did.

"I'll doubt her no longer," the detective mused. "She is the real Joan, and the other one is an impostor, whom Doc Darkley proposes to use for monetary gain."

Aloud, he said, after a few minutes of silence and deliberation:

"Miss Porter, I can find room to doubt you no longer, nor that you are not what you claim to be. But, this fact does not materially lighten the mystery that hangs over my detective case."

"Indeed! I am sorry to hear that. If there is anything I can do to assist you, pray tell me."

"You might be able to give me some points, that would help me along, for I am bound to get at the bottom of this matter, if it takes me all winter and next summer included. If you overheard the interview between myself and your father, you will remember my asking if he had interests remaining, in England."

"Yes."

"He gave me no answer to the query. Perhaps you can."

"I cannot. Indeed, I prefer not to speak on the subject."

"Ah! well, then, I will not press you. Your father is keeping something back, and until I know what it is, I cannot solve the enigma in all its phases. But, I'll tell you what I do know: There's a plot ahead, against your father, and another girl—the very image of yourself, who claims to also be Joan Porter—is connected with it!"

"Mr. Primrose, you astonish me!"

"Maybe so, but what I say is true. I saw the girl, only last night."

"You did? Where is she now, then? What can all this mean?"

"That remains to be found out. Where the girl is, at present, I have no means of knowing."

He then told her of his experience of the last night, adding, in conclusion:

"Who is this man, Herbert Halsey?"

Joan was silent a moment, looking thoughtful.

"He is a man," she said, at length, "for whom I have but little respect. He comes from the old country, and his parents were once intimate with mine. Since he came to this country, and found my folks in good circumstances, he has endeavored to thrust his attentions upon me, but I have rejected them, as I had no liking for the man."

"You favor Lord Lindsay, then?"

"Not particularly. He is another bore, though papa likes him because he came from the old country, and of a noble family."

"Are you sure that he came from England?—that he is not a fortune-hunting pretender?"

Joan looked up, quickly.

"No, I am not," she replied. "Papa says the Lindsays are a great family, and feels highly honored that his lordship should hunt him up, and become his guest."

Deadwood Dick felt like smiling just then—but he didn't.

"If old Porter hadn't been taken in for a sucker, I'm a catfish!" was, however, the thought that flashed across his mind.

They conversed but a little while longer, changing the subject altogether; then, they set out on their return to Beelzebub.

Dick was tempted to communicate his suspicions to Joan, that her father was being poisoned to death by degrees, by the fellow Jacquett, but something caused his tongue to remain silent, on the subject.

As they were passing along the street, on their arrival back in the camp, they met Lord Lindsay, who frowned when he saw Dick doing the gallant to fair Joan.

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK VENTRILOQUIZES—THE LETTER.

Dick conducted Joan as far as the door of her father's house, and there left her.

He now had the remainder of the day and evening to himself, so he sauntered about town, without appearing to have any particular object in view, but, all the same, his eyes were busy, and nothing that was going on escaped him.

After awhile he sauntered into the Bronze Tiger gaming saloon, and there encountered Calamity, still in the guise of a miner.

"Well, what news?" he asked, when they could get an opportunity to speak together without being too closely observed.

"Not much. The old Jew is the same one I saw in Goldburg, and he and Lindsay had their interview in a room up-stairs. When they came down the old man treated at the bar, and shook hands with Lindsay, after which he mounted a horse and rode away toward Goldburg."

"Humph! What do you think of Lindsay?"

"He's no lord. I'll bet my boots he's a Jew, and the old man's son at that!"

"And consequently the same Abraham Levi who vamoosed the Applejack pawn-shop with the diamonds?"

"Yes, that is my conclusion."

"I'm pretty much of that opinion, myself," Dick agreed. "But the question is, where are the jewels? Do you think old Isaac took them away with him?"

"No. The old rabbit has got a penchant of wearing very tight-fitting clothes, even if they are shabby, and I looked him over thoroughly. If he had had a jewel-box about him, I should have discovered it."

"Then perhaps the old Jew brought the diamonds to Lindsay, having previously had them in his custody."

"I should quicker think that way."

"Well, all that is left for us to do is to try and find out. If Lindsay has the diamonds he won't carry them around in his pocket."

"No, of course not. Maybe he will deposit them in the bank for safe-keeping."

"I only wish he would!" Dick said, with a chuckle.

"It would be a wintry day when he got them again."

While they were talking, a man entered the room and strode toward the faro-table, which was surrounded by a crowd of players, and lookers-on.

Deadwood Dick and Calamity both gave a start at sight of him, for it was Fen Franklin, who had dealt the faro game in Applejack City.

"Ha! what brings him here?" Dick ejaculated, in an undertone.

"Hard to tell; may be he is looking for us!" Calamity replied. "We'd better separate at any rate, to avoid suspicion."

They did so, Dick keeping himself as much out of sight as possible.

Franklin advanced to the faro-table, tapped one of the players on the shoulder, and then, turning, stalked from the room.

The man who was wanted drew out of the game as soon as he could, and also left the room.

Calamity had gone out just ahead of him, and she saw him and Franklin meet at the upper end of the street, where they stood several minutes in conversation.

Calamity watched them until the called man came back toward the saloon, and Franklin strode away toward Goldburg; then she entered the gaming-room and communicated what she had seen.

The man who had consulted with Franklin, was well proportioned, but slouchily dressed, and wore a yellowish beard, which was faded, in places, matted and tangled, and covered his face nearly to the eyes. His hair was of a like color.

Dick and Calamity observed him closely, when he re-entered the saloon, and resumed his seat at the faro-table.

"Well, what's your opinion?" Dick asked.

"I've just formed one!" Calamity replied. "If I am not greatly mistaken that man is Doc Darkley."

"I was wondering if it might not be him. If it is, Fen Franklin is one of his pals."

"Yes. I'm going to know whether it is Darkley, or not."

"How are you going to find out, my wife pard?"

"Easy enough! Have you still control of the ventriloquial power you used to exercise?"

"I don't know. I might manage to throw my voice a little."

"Well, now, I'll leave you, and saunter away. The moment some unsavory-looking man enters the door yonder, you throw your voice into his mouth, and shout: 'Is there a man named Doc Darkley,

here?" I'll be watching the yellow-whiskers, yonder, an' can tell in an instant, if he's our man. If he is, you can bet the earth ag'in the moon Calamity Jane don't lose track of him, until she finds where the girl Joan is."

"Good!" Dick smiled, approvingly.

Dick was not positive whether he could ventriloquize or not, for he had not attempted it, in many months, and, as a rule, ventriloquists have to keep in active training to be successful.

There could be no harm in trying, however, and so Dick watched his opportunity.

It came soon, and in a manner different from what he had expected.

The door of the saloon was thrown open with a bang, and into the place staggered the mountain giant, Fang-Tooth Jim.

He was evidently full-up-to-the-neck, of bug-juice, and spilling for a fight, for he paused, braced himself, and glared around, belligerently.

It was Dick's chance, and he so threw his voice that his words appeared to issue from the giant's lips, in a hoarse, brazen tone:

"Heigh! hillo! Alre ther a gerloot 'bout this shobang, named Doc Darkley?"

The yellow-whiskered man at the table, who had evidently not noticed the giant before, gave a perceptibly violent start, darted one swift glance of alarm at the supposed speaker, and then, went on playing, without again raising his eyes.

The manifestation was sufficient to convince both Dick and Calamity that he was Doc Darkley, in disguise.

As for Fang-Tooth Jim, he glared around, in great amazement. He was not so drunk but what he was aware that he had not uttered a word, and yet the voice had sounded so much like his very own, and had spoken the very words he was just on the point of uttering, that it was little wonder he did not know what to make of it.

"Waal, I'll be smashed inter jolly!" he cried, "ef thet don't corral the cookie! Did ary one o' you gerloots heer the fluctuations of my gentle voice, jist then? Did any one of you see er eruptive an' arthquakekick wiggle of my jaw, or flip-flop av my upper an' lower kisser? Do I luk like a big bellerin' bull calf, as would stan' still wi' my hands in me pockets, an' me vittle-smotherer tight shet, an' spit out sech an' inquirando as ye all heerd, when I entered this room? No sir-ee, harmonious hoss-ly; nary time. I jest walked inter this ranch, gents, wi' nary an ammerconda or python in me boots, an' were goin' ter ask ye in gentle an' persuasive tones, ef there war sech a purson around here, as Doctor Darkley, when some mean, dirty 'rang'-tang of a loafer up an' snatches the words off'm the eend o' my talkin' protuberance, an' uttered them, hiss-ly, even stealin' my nattered falset-ter voice, to do et wi'. Now, pilgrims, that's what I call mean—dirty, low-lived mean, I do! An' ef ary gerloot will show me the persimmons as pinched onder my prattle, I'll guarantee he'll be rewarded in the hereafter. An' I'll mop up this hyer ter-bacca-stained floor wi' ther gerloot as infringed on my copyright, as sure as my name is Fang-Tooth Jim, the Howlin' Hero of Hell's Delight!"

The crowd listened, but no one vouchsafed an answer, and after glaring about inquiringly, for several minutes, the giant suddenly seemed to remember that he was dry, and cantered off in the direction of the bar, where he proceeded to put down glass after glass of bug-juice.

Deadwood Dick and Calamity met, outside, a few minutes later, and the girl detective was jubilant.

"It couldn't have happened better!" she said. "The giant's coming just capped the climax. Yellow-beard is Doc Darkley, fast enough, and you can call me a shad if I don't dog him, until I find the girl!"

"That's the stuff! But go careful. If he thought we were on his trail he would be very cautious."

"I'll look out for that. As for you, you hadn't better be around, too much, for fear Halsey may turn up and recognize you."

"Little danger of that. If I mistake not he's in the outlaws' camp yet."

They soon separated, Dick going toward the Porter residence, and Calamity re-entering the saloon.

Just before he reached the house, Dick met Pete, the colored servant.

"Where are you going, Pete?" he asked, halting.

"To de post-office, sah!"

"Why, who's sending a letter, Pete?"

"De young missus, sah!"

"Ah! Is that so? Tell you what I'll do, Pete—I'll give you a five-dollar gold piece, if you will let me glance at the direction on the envelope."

"Darsen't, Marse Paul—'deed I darsen't!"

"Oh! Go 'long! What harm will that do? Here! I'll give you ten! What say?"

"'Deed I see 'fraid you go tell de missy, sah."

"No I won't; I'll give you my word of honor on that score."

With some hesitation the negro exposed the letter, but he made no hesitation in pocketing the ten-dollar note.

The address upon the envelope, was:

"MR. KARL DEY,
Beelzebub."

"That will do!" Dick said, and passed on, and entered the Porter home. "Mr. Karl Dey, eh? I wonder who he is. Some new flame of Joan's?"

It was not until he sat at the supper-table, that a thought popped into his head.

"By Jove! I've got it!" he mused. "D-a-r-k-l-e-y—that also spells Karl Dey!"

He did not linger at the table, for an after-supper chat, as was his usual wont. He ate little, and that little, rapidly, and was soon upon the street, again.

"By Jove! this discovery nearly unnerves me!" he muttered, as he made his way toward the Bronze Tiger.

He entered the Bronze Tiger, and procured a cigar, at the same time taking note of everything about him with one swift, sweeping glance.

The yellow-whiskered man was still at the faro-table, and judging by his several stacks of ivories, was in good luck.

The room was pretty well filled with miners and adventurers, and Dick got an opportunity to speak to Calamity, without being particularly observed.

"Go to the Elephant!" he directed, "and ask for a letter for Karl Dey. If you get it, bring it to me."

"All right."

She left the saloon, and was gone but a few minutes when she returned, and slipped a letter into his hand.

"Let's seek a place where we will be less observed," Dick said. "Whiskers is fast at faro, for hours yet."

They left the Tiger, and entered a cigar store, where Dick opened and perused the letter, Calamity looking over his shoulder.

The following was what they read:

"KARL:—I haven't had an opportunity to see you, and so will let you know by mail. Everything is working right, and I am now satisfied that Lindsay is the man. Don't fear—I'm not gone on him. I promised you I'd do the right thing, and I will. Papa is not so well, to-night. Isn't it strange, who ever can ail him? Poor indulgent papa."

"As for Lindsay, he proposed, last night, and is to get his answer to-night. He is clear gone on me, poor fool! Of course I shall promise to marry him, for he says if I will do so, he will, in a few days make me a present of some of the rarest jewels I ever laid eyes on. So, of course, that settles that. Can't write any more. As soon as I can get to see you, I've something to tell you. Bye-bye!"

"J."

That was all; and Dick put the letter in his pocket, as he and Calamity left the store.

"That settles that," he said. "Lindsay, or Levi, is stuck on the girl, and she is working him for all he's worth, so as to get possession of Bill Bird's diamonds. She and Darkley are evidently in the scheme, together."

"Certainly, and if I read you right, your faith in the home girl is considerably shaken!" Calamity said dryly.

"Yes, I don't deny it. She won me over, completely, this afternoon, but this letter changes my mind. I don't believe, now, that she is any more Philander Porter's daughter than you are. We must find the other girl. So you'd better go and watch Darkley. I've got something else in mind."

And they separated.

CHAPTER XIV.

"PORT AT LAST."

As flourishing a "city" as was Beelzebub, but one lawyer had yet ventured to "hang out his shingle" there.

In fact, in some of the rough mining-camps of the West, it takes a plucky man to announce that he is a lawyer, as the roughs who have no regard for law or order often single out the enterprising disciple of Blackstone as a target for pistol practice.

John Fitz John, however, was a man of a great deal of personal assurance, and bragged that were lightning to strike him on the cheek it would glance off, without doing him the slightest injury.

Fitz John had opened an office over one of the saloons, put up his sign, and thus far had done a brisk business.

This evening we find him sitting in his room, smoking a cigar, with the air of a man who owned the world, when there came a rap at the door, followed by the entrance of a man.

The man was cloaked to his feet, in a black gossamer, wore a slouch hat, a black mask over his face, and carried a cocked "six" in his right grasp.

Fitz John's legs had been elevated at an angle of forty-five degrees, his heels resting upon the desk, but that did not prevent him gaining a standing position in an instant.

"Oh! sit still—don't disturb yourself, my friend!" the man in the mask said, coolly helping himself to a chair. "Sit down!"

"I, I—who—who are you?" Fitz John gasped.

"Oh! I'm only a robber and cut-throat. I ain't dang'rous, except when I'm riled."

"Wh-what d'you w-w-want?"

"Just dropped in on biz. Sit down I say!"

Fitz obeyed, though his inclination was to make for the door.

"Yer name's Fitz John?" the visitor said.

"Yes, sir."

"You're a lawyer?"

"Yes, sir."

"You draw up wills, sometimes?"

"Of course; that is a lawyer's business."

"You drew one up for Philander Porter, quite recently?"

"No, sir."

"Take care!"

"I—I mean yes, sir!"

"What did you lie for?"

"I wasn't to tell."

"Oh, you wasn't, eh? Well, now, see here—you'd better not try any more of that sort of shenanigan with me, or I'll put a leaden leech in yer cabeza. When did ye draw up Porter's will?"

"About two weeks ago."

"What disposition did he make of his property?"

"I—"

"Now, no more 'I—I's' about it!" said the mask, savagely. "Just you produce that will, and let me

see it, or I'll spatter your few brains up against the wall behind you. I mean business, and you will find it out to your cost if you don't hurry up!"

Fitz John, thus admonished, lost no time in producing the document and placing it on the table.

The visitor took it and glanced it over eagerly.

The will made the following bequest:

With the exception of an annual dowry of five thousand dollars to his widow, Philander Porter left all his fortune to his daughter, Joan Porter—the fortune consisting of the Red Knife mine, his house and bank building in Beelzebub; all of his money, amounting to one hundred thousand dollars or thereabouts; and an old baronial estate in Surrey, England, known as the Leeches, valued at half a million dollars.

The masked visitor threw the will back upon the table with a "Humph!" and arose and drew his gossamer closer around him.

"It's all right, I reckon," he said, grimly; "but mind you, Fitzy, if I find out that you've mentioned this interview to any one, I'll be responsible for your wantin' a pine box. A word to the wise is sufficient."

"You may be assured I shall keep the secret!" the lawyer shiveringly replied; and the masked visitor took his departure.

As he emerged from the dark stairway upon the street, he was considerably changed. He wore neither the gossamer nor the mask; and, as the reader may have inferred, he was Deadwood Dick, or, more properly, Paul Primrose, for the goggles once more hid his eyes.

He had found out that which both Philander Porter and his alleged daughter were so reticent about—their interests in the old country.

After leaving the lawyer's office, Dick once more visited the Bronze Tiger, but not finding Calamity there, he hung around the various resorts until midnight. As Calamity did not put in an appearance then, he sought the Porter residence and retired for the night.

He awoke bright and early, and after snatching a hasty breakfast, mounted his horse—a fine animal he had purchased since coming to Beelzebub, but only used when he took a morning canter—and rode out of the camp.

For some reason, which he could hardly have explained, he did not take the Goldburg trail, but rode away to the southward.

Dick had proceeded about three miles down the gulch, when his horse suddenly shied and nearly threw him. He quickly drew rein and gazed about, and was not long in finding out what was the matter.

An old man lay beside the trail, his head resting upon a little bundle done up in ticking. His eyes were closed, and an occasional moan escaped his lips.

He wore a sailor's suit and cap, which had grown rusty with age, and the boots upon his feet were worn away nearly to the uppers.

Dick at once dismounted, and, approaching him, knelt by his side.

"Hello, old pard!" he said, gently shaking him. "Who are you, and what appears to be the difficulty?"

"I'm Dolphin Dave, the pirate, an' the ship's a-sinkin'. Let me be!" was the faint reply. "The grog's all gone, an' there's nothin' but bilge-water left."

The eyes did not open, and a shudder passed over the man's form.

Dick produced a small flask of brandy.

He poured a small quantity of the liquor between his parched lips.

The effect was electric.

The lips smacked together with a gusto, and these words burst forth:

"Thank Heaven! Port at last!"

The eyes opened, and gazed wildly around.

At first they appeared to dwell on vacancy, but finally they became fixed upon the face of Deadwood Dick, who, for the time being, had removed his glasses, and then the old tar raised his trembling hand, and passed it over his furrowed forehead.

"Ah! that was good grog!" he faintly articulated. "It infuses new life in me, an' sets my blood moving. Give me more!"

Dick saw that the old fellow had been a hard drinker, as most sailors are, and that probably he had been for days without stimulant, and was nearly famished and distracted, for the want of it. So he allowed him to take a moderate pull at the flask, after which he restored it to his pocket.

The liquor had the effect to brace the sailor up wonderfully, for he soon managed to sit up.

"You've saved my life, mate!" he said, gratefully. "I'd 'a' died soon, ef it hadn't been for the grog."

"Who are you, and what are you doing away out in this wild country?" Dick asked. "Your home is plainly on the water."

"Yes, the water has been my home for many a year, but I want to die where the sharks won't get me. The old Caribbean—ah! many an exciting adventure I've had on those waters!"

"The Caribbean?"

Dick's mind went back to his interview with Philander Porter, who had said his brother was a Caribbean pirate. Could it be possible this old salt was the banker's brother?

"Yes, the Caribbean," the sailor replied. "What do you know about the Caribbean?"

"Not much, I'll assure you. You are very weak, I take it."

"Yes. My legs won't never get used to this blasted land. Then, too, I've had nothing to eat for three days."

"No wonder you are broke up. Now, see here."

know of a snug little cave, not far away. You'd better let me take you there till you get stronger. I'll see that you are supplied with food, and a moderate allowance of liquor, and you'll soon be all O. K."

"You are very kind, mate—very kind, and I fear I won't never be able to repay you."

"Oh, yes you will. All I want is the story of your life, and that will repay me for everything I can do for you."

"Then you shall have it, in welcome, sir."

Dick glanced at his watch.

He still had two good hours before it would be time to return to Beelzebub and open the bank.

Stooping, he lifted the old sailor in his stout arms, and lifting him to the horse's back piloted the horse back on the trail to a little hole in the wall of a cave wherein he fixed up a couch of pine boughs, and had the old man feeling quite comfortable.

"Now, then," he said, after administering another taste of the brandy, "I'll hear your story, and will go and hunt you up some food."

"All right, mate; I'll spin the yarn as best I can. It isn't no fairy-tale, nor Sunday-school story, but I don't suppose you expect that."

"To begin with, I'll have to take you back to old England, over thirty years ago. I was then a wild young fellow, of good family, just out of college. The old folks wanted me to study for the ministry, but I ran away and joined the navy."

"I soon tired of the monotony of that sort of life, and when we were in the Caribbean sea, I deserted, and joined a pirate craft. My reckless daring quickly raised me to the position of mate, and eventually I became commander, and made myself famous as Dolphin Dave, the pirate."

"Ten years later I gave up the sea, and went to Paris. There I married an actress. We lived together till all my money was gone, a matter of four years; then she gave me my walking-papers, and returned to the stage. I returned to the sea. She kept our infant child."

"The next five years of my life I spent in piracy, and then gave up that sort of life, and under another name, shipped as a common seaman. I followed that forecastle life until two years ago, when I returned to Paris to seek my child."

"I found that Elmore, my wife, and our child, had last been heard of in a London theater six years before. I went to London; thence I traced them to Cardiff, Wales. There I learned that Elmore was dead, and that Editha, my child, had been adopted by a man named Bertrand, who was a mere boy when I left old England. He and Editha had gone to America two years before. My younger brother and his family, were also in America."

"Bound to see them, and if possible, my child, before I died, I set out for this country. Chicago being my destination—for it was there I was told I would find my brother, Philander; but, on my arrival there, I found that my brother had removed to Carson City, Nevada. My money was pretty near exhausted, but, hoping my brother might know something of my daughter, I set out on my long journey. I walked all the way, reserving what money I had for a scanty supply of food and liquor. I had always been subject to the free use of liquor, and could not do without it."

"My heart sunk when, on arriving at Carson City, I learned that my brother had moved to a place called Beelzebub. I expended my last money at Carson and divided it equally between supplies of liquor and food, and once more set out. Three days ago both supplies gave out; still I kept bravely on, till I could go no longer, and last night fell unconscious by the wayside, where you found me. That's all."

"A most strange and interesting narrative," Dick commented. "And it is my lot to give you some cheer. Beelzebub is less than three miles distant, and as soon as you are recruited in strength, I will see that you get there. Your name is Porter, is it not?"

"Yes, yes—David Porter!"

"Then your brother Philander lives in Beelzebub. He is a banker, and I am his clerk."

"Heaven be praised! When can I see him?"

"When I have made a few arrangements that are imperative. You must be patient and remain here."

"I will do just as you wish, only fetch me food and liquor, so I can get braced up."

"You shall have both. And, now, about this girl of yours. Is there any way you could identify her if you were to find her?"

"Yes, there is. She has a blood-red birth-mark upon her right arm near the elbow—just below it—in the shape of a crescent, or half-moon, and has a slightly deformed little finger of the left hand."

"Thanks for that information. It is quite possible I may be able to present you to your daughter when I take you to Beelzebub. And now I must go. I will leave this bottle with you. Use the stuff only lightly. I will send you food as soon as possible. Keep up good spirits, and perhaps by to-night or to-morrow night, I can take you to your brother's."

"God bless you, mate; I will do just as you say."

Dick then took his departure, and rode thoughtfully back toward the town.

"The game is mine!" he muttered. "Slowly but surely the ball of mystery is unwinding for me, and I already see the beacon light of success, not far ahead."

It did really seem so. The sudden appearance of David Porter made matters look wonderfully improved.

It was not yet time to open the bank, and so he rode slowly.

Half a mile from Beelzebub he espied Jean Jacquett coming toward him on foot.

Deadwood Dick's mind was made up in an instant. He would force a confession from the man.

CHAPTER XV.

JACQUETT'S CONFESSION.

JACQUETT, as he came along, was looking from one side of the trail to the other, and occasionally would stoop and pull up some weed. He also carried a bunch of weeds in one hand.

As they neared one another, Dick drew rein and at the same time pointed a cocked revolver at the agent-doctor.

"Jacquett!" he cried, sternly. "halt where you are and drop your hands to your sides!"

The order was promptly obeyed, and Jacquett looked very much alarmed.

"What's the matter?—what have I been doing?" he asked, in an unsteady tone.

"You've been doing too much—you've been overworking yourself and overtaking your vast intellect!" Dick said, significantly, as he slid from the saddle. "In fact, history has lost a gem in not encompassing you within its pages, and I desire to write you up—or, rather, you must write yourself up!"

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Don't you? Then I'll be plainer. You've got to make a confession, or die, one of the two. You can be the chooser!"

"A confession of what, sir?"

"Of your villainous work at the Porter residence. Bah! don't think I don't know all about it. Bertrand, alias Doctor Darkley may think he has a trusty tool, but he will be fooled. Philander Porter has had quite all the poison he wants for one while."

Jacquett turned deathly white, and trembled perceptibly.

"I—I—" he began, but an imperious wave of Deadwood Dick's hand stopped him.

"No 'I-I's' about it," Dick warned, fiercely. "I know that you have been poisoning Mr. Porter, and that Doc Darkley put you up to it. Now, the only thing for you to do is make a full confession on paper, implicating Darkley. Refuse to do so and I will leave you lying here beside the trail, a corpse. I mean business. Will you write the full truth or will you die—which? Speak quick, for I've no time to waste!"

"Supposing I make the confession—what then?"

"Then, you can keep right on tramping toward the rising sun, with the penalty of death awaiting you if you turn back, and are ever seen in or around Beelzebub, again!"

A look of relief passed over Jacquett's face.

"Do you mean it?" he demanded.

"My promise is never violated, and, you have it!"

"Very well; I will do as you wish."

He sat down upon a rock, and took a pencil and memorandum-book, from his pocket. He tore out what leaves had been written on, and then wrote rapidly.

Dick waited, leaning against his horse.

In ten minutes Jacquett arose, and handed him the book.

"That's the best I can do!" he said.

Dick read the confession over, carefully.

It was as follows:

"CONFESSION!"

"This is to certify that I, Jean Jacquett, have been prevailed upon to make a confession of my guilt, and I make it freely, in hopes that God and those I have injured, may forgive me."

"I have, for a couple of years, been a medical student under Doctor Bardwell, of Carson City. One of Dr. Bardwell's patients, a Mr. Philander Porter, suffering slightly from general debility, removed to the town of Beelzebub, and being a liberal customer I was detailed to accompany him and administer to his wants."

"At this juncture, a villain named Dr. Darley approached me, and said if I would administer a slow poison which he supplied, instead of Bardwell's medicine, he would give me three thousand dollars spot cash, and when Porter died, as he eventually would, I should receive seven thousand dollars more—ten, all told."

"Satan tempted me and I accepted. Darkley instructed me how to prepare the decoction of local poisonous herbs, and I did so. Once in the mire, I did not back out, for fear of exposure and arrest. But now, being assured of my liberty, I give this confession, and also an antidote that will counteract the effects of the poison, and eventually restore the victim to his usual health."

"Signed, JEAN JACQUETT."

Appended was a prescription recommended to do what he had promised—to restore the patient to health again.

"That will fill the bill!" Dick said, putting the book in his pocket. "You may go, now, acting upon my previous warning, and I hope you will never get into another such a scrape."

"You can bet I won't!" Jacquett averred, crushing the poison weeds beneath his feet. "There is nothing in villainy, anyhow, but final defeat and disgrace."

Dick at once remounted his horse, and continued on toward Beelzebub, while Jacquett hurried away down the gulch, evidently only too glad to get off so easily.

When Dick arrived in the mining-camp, it was near time to open the bank, so he was soon at his duty behind the counter.

The day passed draggingly, the more so, perhaps, because Dick ached to be free to pursue his now hot trail.

Just before noon, Calamity entered the bank, still in her disguise of the miner, and Dick saw at once, by the expression of her face, that she had good news to communicate.

"Well, what's the racket?" he asked, eagerly.

"First-class, you bet!" was the reply.

"You found the girl, then?"

"Yes, or at least, where she is kept. When Darkley left the Bronze Tiger, I did, too. He didn't leave camp right away, but dodged around, here and there, as if he was suspicious that some one was watching him. It didn't make any difference, though; I was just as sharp at dodging as he, and when he finally left camp, I was close after him."

"Well?"

"Well, he went up the Goldburg trail, about a mile, and then turned off into a densely wooded gorge, which he followed for another mile. Then he came to the deserted cabin of an abandoned claim that is in good condition. It's in this cabin that the girl is held a prisoner."

"Ah! Then, you saw her?"

"Yes. After Darkley entered the roost, I got a peep inside."

"Whom did you see?"

"The girl, Darkley, and Fen Franklin. The girl was lying upon some skis, bound hand and foot."

"Did you overhear any of the conversation?"

"Not much. They talked too low. However, I heard Halsey's name mentioned, and heard Darkley ask: 'Did you plant him?' By that, I inferred that Franklin had recently come from the outlaw camp, and that Halsey had been killed."

"Not improbable. What show is there for rescuing the girl?"

"Well, I hung around until morning, and then the men came out of the cabin. Before Darkley started for here, I heard him say: 'You'd better hang around here till dark, and then go to camp. Don't be gone long, as some one might blunder up this way and find the girl, and be sure you leave her well tied, when you go!'"

"Ah! then it's all right. She can then be rescued as soon as Franklin leaves?"

"Yes."

They conversed awhile longer. Dick narrating his experience of that morning. He then ordered Calamity to visit the cave, and take David Porter a supply of food, to tide him over until the time arrived to bring him to Beelzebub.

Calamity was not long in making ready to act the good Samaritan and took a large parcel of tempting things, not forgetting to add a quart bottle of the best whisky obtainable.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CASE CLOSING IN—VICTORY WITHIN REACH.

DICK closed up the bank, and went to dinner, as soon as Calamity had left him. Mr. Porter was at the table, but not looking so well as usual.

Joan was also present, in a most charming toilet, and seemed to exert herself to make herself as pleasant as possible to the boarder.

Lord Lindsay was not at the table.

When dinner was over, Dick arose, and said:

"If it will not trouble you too much, Mr. Porter, I'd like you to come down to the bank, this afternoon. There are some matters there that demand your personal attention."

"Very well, sir. I will come down."

It was two o'clock, when he reported, and as there was a lull in business, they had a chance for a long private talk.

"Mr. Porter," Dick said, "I suppose you are not aware, that your declining health is principally owing to poison?"

"Poison!" the banker gasped.

"Ay! poison!"

"Why, certainly not. What do you mean, sir?"

"Just what I say. You have, for some time past, been dying of slow poison!"

"Bosh! nonsense! You talk crazy, man."

"You don't believe me, then?"

"Certainly not. Your assertion is preposterous!"

"You may think so, but I know better. If you won't believe me, perhaps you'll believe this!"

And he handed him Jacquett's confession. The banker read it over, slowly, and as he read his face grew pale, and he drew a long breath, as he looked up.

"Where did you get this?" he gasped.

"Of Jacquett. I suspected he was Doctor Darkley's tool, and I forced a confession out of him."

"Ah! then you—"

"Am the person who interviewed you under the alias of Detective Gray. Yes, Mr. Porter, I have not only exposed the scheme to poison you, but I have found your real daughter!"

"My real daughter!"

"Your real daughter. If you will permit me to do so, I will to-night bring her to your house; I will prove to your utmost satisfaction that there was a change of girls, and that the girl I have found is your daughter, that the girl you are fostering, is not your daughter, but the daughter of your brother, David Porter the ex-convict!"

The banker looked astounded.

He gasped, and made an attempt to speak, but it was ineffectual.

"This may all seem strange to you, but there has been a most dastardly and daring attempt to swindle you, and it has fallen to my lot to frustrate it. Your daughter, Joan, was kidnapped, and your brother's child, Editha, a most clever actress, was substituted in her place, and as the two girls were wonderfully alike, you never knew the difference!"

"This is incredible, sir."

"It is nevertheless true, sir. I assure you."

"Then, Bill Bird was right?"

"He was."

"Where is this girl, whom you claim as my daughter?"

"She is at present a prisoner in the power of this man Doctor Darkley, but she shall be rescued as soon as it becomes dark, to-night, and with your permission, brought to your house, there to con-

front the fair and skillful schemer, who is usurping her place. I shall also arrange to have Darkley present."

"Who in God's name is this Darkley? I never heard of him, before you mentioned him."

"His real name is Bertrand. He once lived in England, near your home."

"Ah! I remember him. He was a lawyer, and once tried to get my patronage, in the old country, but, after trying him, I found him to be a rogue, and dismissed him from my employ. That was just before I came to America. But, how do you know that the usurper, as you term her, is my brother's child?"

"Because I learned as much from your brother's lips!"

"What?"

"Just as I tell you. Your brother is not three miles from this town, and you will see him to-night!"

"Wonder of wonders! Can this be true? It seems like a fairy tale."

"Truth is oftentimes stranger than fiction, you know. Eighteen years ago, or thereabouts, your brother, David, left the sea, and married an actress, in Paris. They lived together a few years, and then separated, his wife retaining possession of their child, and David going back to sea. Two years ago, he bade a final adieu to the water, and set out to find his child. A long search followed, and he found that his wife, Elnore, had died, in Cardiff, Wales, and Editha, the daughter, a clever young actress inheriting the mother's gift, had been adopted, and brought to America. He is now in search of her, and yourself. I found him, this morning, dying by the roadside, for the want of food and drink. I picked him up, nursed him back to life, and he will be in condition to see you, to-night."

"Primrose, you are a great man! If all this be true, you have placed me under everlasting obligations to you."

"Don't mention it. I shall be amply rewarded, by inheriting Bill Bird's diamonds. And now, do you agree to my bringing this matter to a focus with a grand denouement, resulting in the exposure of those who have been parties to this infamous scheme?"

"Certainly! certainly! I leave it all to you."

"Then, in the first place, say nothing to any one, of what has passed between us, and be careful not to betray any excitement, or do anything that will give Editha an inkling that you are suspicious of the cheat. Make arrangements to have Pete let us in by the back way, at nine o'clock. You and Mrs. Porter pretend to retire at eight, but be ready to come down when summoned. The rest can be arranged, nicely. I will write Editha to await me, in the parlor, at ten o'clock. I think she is mashed on me, slightly. I will also cause Bertrand to call at the house, at that hour. Then, we will confront them, and a wholesale exposure will take place."

"Good! Excellent! You have a great head, sir!" the banker said. "All shall be done as you have directed, to-night."

He then took his departure.

After he was gone, Dick penned the following letters.

"MISS PORTER:—If you will be alone, in the parlor, at ten o'clock to-night, I have something to tell you that may interest you."

"Your obedient servant."

"PAUL PRIMROSE."

This letter a boy delivered to the false Joan.

Another letter he wrote in exact imitation of her cirography (having her letter to Darkley, to copy from) and directed it to Karl Dey, at the post-office, in the Elephant Hotel. It ran as follows:

"KARL:—I shall be alone, to-night, at ten o'clock. Come to the house, and walk right in without knocking, for I want to see you. Have no fear, for everybody will be abed, but myself and our servant. He is safe. Don't fail to come. Something important to tell you."

JOAN."

This letter he also dispatched.

By this time it was pretty near closing hour for the bank and he was fixing up the books preparatory, when a man entered.

At first glance he appeared to be a miner, for as such he was dressed, and a shaggy beard covered the most of his face; but Dick's keen eyes, hidden behind those odious green goggles, quickly detected that the beard and the hair to match was false.

"Hillo, pardner!" the man said, leaning upon the counter; "do you run this ranch?"

"I do!" Dick replied.

"Waal, that's what I tho't. S'pose ye keep a pile o' money heer?"

"Some!"

"Waal, that's what I tho't. Banks ginerally do have *sum* money. S'pose burglars never tr'ubble yer—that is, yer collat is always safe from gittin' stole?"

"Oh! yes. Our safes are burglar-proof."

"That's what I tho't. S'posed I war ter fetch a package o' wallybles, an' put 'em in yer hands fer safe-keepin'."

"We would charge you a dollar per day storage, and your valuables would be safe until you want them, sir!"

"Cheap enuff, b' gosh! I'll go fetch 'em!"

He left the bank, crossed the street, and entered the Elephant Hotel, while Dick indulged in a broad, non-orthodox smile.

"It never rains but it pours!" he communed. "That chap does right well at Western vernacular for a Jew, but I happen to know him just as hard. Bring on the diamonds, Mr. Miner, *alias* Lord Lindsay, *alias* Abraham Levi! I'll take care of them for

you, and I'll bet the sun against the moon that scheming Miss Editha Porter never wears them."

The man came back directly and presented a package as large as an ordinary bound book, neatly done up in newspaper.

He gave his name as Jake Green, and said he would call for the "wallybles" inside of a week.

When he was gone, Dick examined the deposit, and found the diamonds, sure enough.

Putting the case in his pocket, he closed the bank, and going over to the hotel, took a room, and—a snooze.

Night was before him, and he knew there was work ahead for him to do. Consequently he must be prepared.

It would not do to be weak, when victory was within his grasp.

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK CORRALES THE DIAMONDS FOR GOOD.

NIGHT was coming rapidly on when Deadwood Dick awoke, and went down-stairs, and what was to be done toward consummating the events of his great detective case must be done without delay.

However, he had his plans pretty well formed and did not think that he would experience much trouble in putting them into execution.

As he passed through the hotel office, he saw Doctor Darkley in his yellow disguise, seated in one corner, reading a letter, which Dick had no doubt was the very one he had penned.

Going to the Bronze Tiger faro-room he found Calamity in her miner's disguise.

"Well, did you go to the cave?"

"Yes. I took the old man a boss feast, and he went for it like fish for fresh bait. I let him sandwich in a nip of whisky every few mouthfuls, and didn't let him have too much to eat at a time, and you just ought to have seen the effect. Why, the old salt got up on his feet after eating and actually danced a sailor's hornpipe. He wanted to come to Beelzebub, but I got him quieted down, and came away. I guess he will be all right until he is wanted."

Dick then related all his arrangements to Calamity, and sent her after the old seaman, whom, under the cover of darkness, she was to take to the rear door of the bank, which was to be his shelter until he was wanted further.

There was nothing now in particular to do until Calamity returned to guide the way to where Joan was held a prisoner, and so Dick went to his supper.

The banker, his wife, the false Joan, and Lindsay were all at the table, and seemed to have little to say, but devoted their energies to the silent disposal of food, a fact that Dick was heartily glad of, for he did not feel like being too closely questioned or inspected. Joan gave him one bright smile, when he entered, as much as to say that she had received his letter; after that, she scarcely looked at him.

An hour later, as Dick sat on the steps of the bank, smoking a cigar, he was once more approached by Jake Green, the individual who had deposited the diamonds.

"Say, you-h!" he began, "be you the feller I left the package wi', this afternoon?"

"Do I look like him?"

"Durned ef ye don't!"

"Well, I'm the man!"

"That's what I tho't. Ye see, I want the package. I've tuk a notion ter locate in ther East, an' am goin' to start right away."

"Why, what's your hurry?"

"Oh! nothing in partic'lar, only I allus acts on short notis. So ef you'll give me the package, I'll mount me muel, an' mosy."

Dick arose, unlocked the door of the bank, and they entered. Dick then entered the little room, where the safes were located, and was absent, several minutes. When he reappeared, he laid a bunch of bank-notes on the counter, and beside them a pawn-ticket.

"There! I believe that is correct!" he said, coolly, at which a torrent of oaths burst from the disguised pawnbroker's lips.

"Curses seize you! What do you mean?" he cried, fiercely, forgetting his vernacular, and dropping his hand toward his hip-pocket.

"But, Dick's gleaming 'six" peeped over the top of the counter, at the same instant, warningly.

"I mean!" Dick said, grimly, "that your disguise is too transparent for use, Lord Lindsay, *alias* Abraham Levi, and that, according to the last words of William Bird before he died, the diamonds are mine. You loaned Bird five thousand on jewels worth seventy-five, with the understanding that he was to pay you ten thousand, as redemption money. There is your ten thousand, and the pawn-ticket. Take it, and make yourself scarce!"

"Curse you! curse you! The diamonds are mine! Give them to me!"

"Nary a give, Levi! You may count yourself lucky that so much money is placed at your disposal. And, another thing let me tell you, my masquerading Hebrew dude—the fair banker's daughter don't care any more for you than a cow does for carpet-tacks, and has been drawing you on, in anticipation that you would give her the jewels, which she knows all about, the same as she knows that you are not Lord Lindsay. If you don't believe me, go tell her you have no jewels, at all, and see how quick she will bounce you. So, all things considered, if I were you, Abraham, I'd do the purty—take time by the bangs, or forelock, as the case may be, and fold my tent, and steal silently away, like the orthodox Arab; go to some land, for instance, where, once you hook a sucker he won't flop over the bank into the stream again."

For a couple of minutes Levi gazed at the cause of his defeat, wildly; then, seizing the money, he hurriedly left the bank.

Half an hour later, Deadwood Dick saw him riding away, out of town, on the Goldburg trail.

Shortly after dark, Calamity arrived with David Porter, and the old man was induced to remain in the bank for a couple of hours, being given to understand that a surprise was to be arranged, for his brother. It was now time to visit the wild-wood cabin, and release Joan, and so Dick and Calamity at once set out.

They reached their destination in due time, but found the hut deserted!

Joan was gone!

For a moment they stared at each other at loss what to say, or how to act.

"Furies take the luck!" Dick finally burst forth. "Are we to be baffled thus, when victory is awaiting us?"

"Nary time!" Calamity replied. "The girl is gone, but something tells me she is not far away."

"More likely Franklin has carried her off, with the purpose of taking a hand in the game."

Dick produced a lantern from his saddle-bags, and by its light, they closely examined the ground, in the vicinity of the lodge.

There were plain evidences of a struggle, and as if some person had been partly dragged along.

Dick could read a trail with the ease of an Indian, and he was not long in discovering that some person had recently gone up the gorge.

"As I expected!" he declared. "Franklin has taken the girl to some point further up the gulch. We must follow—you at one side of the gorge—I at the other."

They unslung their rifles from their saddle-holders, and skulked cautiously away through the somber forests, like grim phantoms.

They had not gone half a mile, yet, when Dick heard a piercing scream, and that, too, only a little way ahead.

Leaping forward, he quickly came to the edge of a moonlit dell, across which Franklin was trying to force his captive.

"Ye won't walk, eh?" the ruffian roared, as the girl strugglingly resisted. "Waal, then, you die! I'm tired o' monkeyin' wi' you. Now, either you walk, or I'll murder you, and have done with it."

He drew a knife, as he spoke, and held it threateningly above poor Joan's head.

At this instant, Deadwood Dick's rifle spoke, and his unerring aim sent a bullet crashing through the gambler's wrist.

Then, Dick leaped out into the glade.

Franklin saw him, and a fierce oath burst from his lips. He hurled Joan flat upon the ground, and placed one foot upon her; then, with his uninjured hand, drew a revolver, and leveled it at her.

"Back!" the ruffian cried, to Deadwood Dick. "Advance another step, and I'll blow the gal's brains out, if I die for it, the next minute!"

Dick halted, for he knew the man was a desperate wretch, and doubted not but what he would fulfill his threat.

"You might just as well turn around, and take the back trail!" Franklin cried, hoarsely, "for you will never git this gal, alive—not, at least, until I've made my stake. I'll either make money out o' her, or I'm goin' to kill her."

Evidently he believed Dick to be alone in the pursuit, or he would not have been so insolent.

He had great nerve, standing there at bay, with the blood flowing freely from his right disabled hand; but, he "reck'ed without his host"—there came two sharp reports, from the edge of the glade, in rapid succession.

One bullet shattered the ruffian's left hand; the other struck him in the breast, and, with a horrified cry, he staggered back, tottered like a falling tree, and fell to the ground.

Calamity had sped the winning bullets!

Dick at once ran forward, lifted Joan to her feet, and released her of the bonds that confined her limbs.

Calamity soon joined them, and Dick then made an examination of the gambler's wounds, for he had fainted.

"They are not serious. I'll send the deputy-sheriff to take care of him!" Dick said. "When he finds he is a prisoner, he will likely turn on Darkley."

They at once set out on their return to Beelzebub, for it would be time for Dick's denouement to take place by time they could reach the camp.

On the way, Joan related so much of her experiences, since her abduction, that there no longer existed a doubt but what she was the genuine Joan Porter.

And when she learned that her parents lived in Beelzebub, her joy knew no bounds, and she expressed her gratitude to Dick and Calamity in warmest terms.

Dick gave her an inkling of the plot that had been worked to defraud her of her rights, and when she learned of the death of Bill Bird she was much affected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EDITHA'S CONFESSION—CONCLUSION.

DOCTOR DARKLEY, *alias* Byron Bertrand, the arch schemer, had received the note penned by Deadwood Dick, but purporting to come from Joan, and perused it over and over again.

"What can the girl want of me?" he muttered, with a frown. "Like enough she has gone and made a mess of matters, and is liable to exposure. I don't much fancy going to that house, for if old Porter should happen to hear my voice he would know it."

But he concluded to make the call and run the risks.

At ten o'clock he reached the Porter residence, attired the same as when Dick had overheard his

interview with Jacquett, in Carson City, except that he wore no gossamer.

There was a light in the front room, but the curtains were down. Presuming that all was right, he softly opened the front door and entered the hall. Closing the door, he stepped into the parlor and shut its door behind him.

Editha, as we shall henceforth call her, was seated by the table, a look of expectancy upon her face, which instantly changed to astonishment as she saw Bertrand.

"Mr. Bertrand!" she gasped, arising.

"Why, certainly, dear! Were you— Why, what is the matter?"

"Matter! Why, sir, what in the world brings you here? I am surprised!"

Bertrand uttered an oath.

"What brings me here?" he echoed. "Why, that, to be sure! Did you not write it, inviting me here at this hour?"

"Great Heaven!—no! I was waiting for another caller."

"Ten thousand devils! Then we are trapped!"

"Yes!" came a stern voice; "you are trapped, and if you move a muscle or stir in your tracks, you'll be *drapp'd*!"

In horror and consternation, the two gazed in the direction whence came the voice.

A door communicating with a rear apartment had opened, and several persons had filed noiselessly into the parlor, foremost among whom was Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane, each holding a pair of cocked revolvers leveled at the guilty pair.

The others were Philander Porter, Mrs. Porter, Joan and David Porter.

A torrent of oaths burst from Bertrand as Dick and Calamity advanced.

"Back, you devils!" he gasped. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are my prisoner!" Deadwood Dick sternly announced; "and if you do not peaceably surrender, and submit to being bound, I will blow your brains out with as little compunction as I would shoot a coyote. I mean business, and you give me any trouble and I'll prove it, to your sorrow!"

Bertrand saw that, beyond a doubt, his game was up, but the very thought of defeat drove him furious.

That did not hinder the two detectives from accomplishing their purpose.

Calamity thrust her weapons right before the doctor's eyes, while Dick produced straps, with which he secured his hands and feet.

Bertrand was then pushed into an arm-chair, and Dick turned to Editha.

She had sunk back upon the lounge, faint and white.

"Miss Porter!" he said, "I am sorry to state that it becomes my duty to confine your hands."

"No! no!" she gasped—"not yet! First let me speak. I will make a clean breast of the whole matter!"

"Curse you, don't you dare!" fairly shrieked Bertrand from his chair.

"You shut up!" Dick commanded, sternly.

Then, turning to Editha, he said:

"Very well, Miss Porter. If you wish to speak, go ahead. But remember, we are watching you, and shall prevent you from making any attempt upon your life."

Editha laughed, sarcastically.

"Pray don't take me for quite so big a fool as all that!" she said. "The game is up, I see, but I haven't the slightest idea of committing suicide, on that account. Life is far too sweet for that. Yes, the game is balked, and I'm not sorry. I've had an idea, all along, that the bottom would fall out, and so it has."

"Well, go ahead, if you have anything to say," Dick ordered, impatiently; "we've no time to waste."

"Don't get in a hurry. I can't go faster than a walk, now. Do you, who appear to have brought about this interesting climax, know who I am?"

"I do. You are the daughter of David Porter."

"Correct. I am his daughter, although I don't remember of ever having seen him. Mamma used to tell me he was a pirate, and I suppose he was."

"Well, he and mamma didn't live together, long, after I was born, and when they separated, mamma went back to the stage—she was an actress, you see. Of course she took me with her, and I grew up on the stage, playing child parts when I was but four years of age."

"I never had much schooling, except what I picked up myself. I was apt, however, and learned pretty nearly as much on the stage as I could anywhere else."

"Mamma continued to play in Paris, for years, but finally changed to London, to give me more chance to study the English drama. I succeeded fast, and when I was fourteen, made a favorable debut."

"Soon after, mamma was taken ill, and knowing her disease to be consumption, we gave up the stage, and removed to Cardiff, Wales, at the solicitation of Mr. Bertrand, who had formed mamma's acquaintance, in London."

"It was while at Cardiff, when mamma was rapidly declining, and Bertrand was giving us pecuniary assistance, that he unfolded to us his scheme to get possession of the magnificent baronial estate, known as the Leeches, which had recently descended to my uncle, Philander Porter, who knew nothing of our existence. He said my cousin and I were exact counterparts, and could not be told apart, and suggested that it would be an easy matter for him to put me in my cousin's place, and remove and keep her in the background."

"At first mamma would not listen to such a thing, but so persistently did he urge, and such brilliant pictures did he paint of the bright future I would have, that he aroused my interest, and when mamma saw that I was taken up with the scheme, she gradually yielded."

"Bertrand had an oily tongue, whose words were hard to resist. He said Philander Porter would not live long, and, as his whole affection was centered in his daughter, she would be the heiress not only to the Leeches, but to all his other wealth. Thus, if he, Bertrand, put me in cousin Joan's place, I would become heiress to all the fortune, half of which I would afterward of course transfer to Bertrand."

"Well, mamma finally consented, and adopted me to Bertrand, after which he set to work to arrange his plans. Before he could accomplish anything, however, Philander Porter and family removed to America, and located in Chicago, leaving the English estate in charge of a bailiff."

"Of course it was necessary that Bertrand and I should follow, and so I bade my mamma a long, last farewell"—here tears glistened in the girl's eyes—"and we came to America."

"We, too, located in Chicago, and Bertrand supported me comfortably while he was maturing his plans."

"He frequently gave me an opportunity to see my cousin, and I studied her closely—marked her every move and motion. We were so wonderfully alike, in face and form, that I had no fear but what I could fill her place."

"Finally, when you moved to Carson City"—she now turned to Mr. and Mrs. Porter, "you advertised for a hired girl—a maid of all work. Bertrand, now known as Doctor Darkley, suggested that I try the job, and I jumped at the chance."

"I had not forgotten how to 'make up,' by a good deal, and when a buxom-looking, modest appearing Irish girl, applied for the situation, you forgave her broad accent, big shoes, and red hair, and hired her."

"Well, I stayed in your employ, until I considered myself competent to occupy Joan's shoes; until I had her every peculiarity by heart, knew all her secrets, her thoughts, her whims—everything, in fact, that she knew about herself."

"You may bet it took a great deal of study, prying and observation to accomplish this, but I was equal to the task. I was in for the races, as it were, and knew no such word as fail."

"Well, in due time Bill Bird turned up in Carson, claiming to be a scout, but Bertrand knew better. He had seen him in London and in Cardiff, and his suspicions were at once aroused."

"So he negotiated with an outlaw, and Bird was gobbled up and taken to the mountains, where he was kept for nine months, when he escaped and returned to Carson, to fall into a fortune."

"In the mean time Bertrand, to get money, had organized a little outlaw party of his own, and it was at last decided to abduct Joan, and I was to step into her place. Do you remember one morning you awoke to find your Irish servant and a valuable lot of silverware missing?"

"Well, it was during the preceding night that Joan was chloroformed and kidnapped, and your Irish servant stepped complacently into her place, her wardrobe, and your affections!"

Editha here paused long enough to give a peculiar, triumphant laugh, while Bertrand uttered a savage oath.

"Well, at first it tested all my powers as a cunning actress to fill the bill, the fair schemer went on; but, as weeks flew by, I gradually became more and more fitted to my role, and it was to me like the part in a play that I had sustained for a whole season. Sometimes I used to wonder if I was not really Joan Porter. Such vagaries will attack people, you know."

"Time passed on and things ran smoothly, until Bill Bird made his reappearance and created a disturbance by denouncing me as an impostor and not the real Joan."

"You all know the sensation it created. Bertrand and I were secretly trembling with fear. However, as good luck would have it, you did not give any credence to Bird's claim."

"But I am getting ahead of my story. After being kidnapped, Joan was given into the custody of a mountain giant named Fangtooth, but otherwise known as Fang-Tooth Jim. Bertrand paid him ten dollars a week to keep the girl out of sight."

"Who was Herbert Halsey?" Dick demanded.

"He was from England; I met him in London. When he came to Carson City he recognized me, and threatened to expose me if I did not marry him. However, I managed to put him off from time to time. But to continue:"

"After Bill Bird's denouncement of me, Bertrand set about trying to find out more about the fellow. As a result, he discovered that Bird had come to America from Cardiff, Wales, and that he had been sent by my mother, who, upon her death-bed, had given him a package of sealed instructions. What was the nature of these instructions we could but surmise, and so Bertrand set out to find Bird, who had left Carson City."

"After a long search he located him at Applejack City, and shot him in the forehead as he stood in front of the High Jack saloon one dark night. He quickly placed the discharged weapon in Bird's hand, so as to make it appear that he had committed suicide, and then fled!"

Deadwood Dick gazed sternly at Bertrand, but the villain only sent back a defiant glance.

"I never knew of this horrible crime, until recently," Editha continued. "I have but little more to add, that is not already known to you. Bertrand knew that Bird had pawned the diamonds, and fol-

lowed Abraham Levi, who skipped out, the night of the murder."

"Levi came here and set himself up as Lord Lindsay, and at Bertrand's order I 'corraled' him, with the result that he was introduced to papa as a scion of the English house of Lindsay. I made the Jew as much in love with me as possible, hoping to get hold of the diamonds. But I failed."

"I have the diamonds," Deadwood Dick said, "having redeemed them from the Jew. Bird's last instructions were that I should have the jewels, providing I found the real Joan Porter and restored her to her rights. He also gave me the package of sealed instructions, to be opened when Joan was found. So I will open them now."

He did so, and found two documents.

"One of these," he said, after glancing them over, "is the death-bed confession of Elnore Porter, and touching upon this case, she says:

"And now, in conclusion, I must right one more wrong. My daughter, Editha, I adopted to one Byron Bertrand, for a wicked purpose. I must have been insane when I did it."

"Bertrand has a plot on foot to get possession of the wealth of my husband's brother, Philander Porter, and proposes to substitute my daughter for Philander's, the two girls being exactly alike in point of resemblance. The infamous plot must be balked and I have given William Bird full instructions in regard to the scheme, and send him to America, armed with this document, to find my daughter and frustrate Bertrand's scheme."

"ELNORE PORTER."

"The other document," continued Deadwood Dick, "is by Bird himself, and its date is the same as the day on which Bird was killed at Applejack City. He says:

"Not knowing what may befall me, I will leave this statement behind: I have found Editha, the daughter of Elnore Porter. Joan, the daughter of Philander Porter, of Carson City, has been abducted and Editha put in her place. I feel my old malady—a month of insanity, when all is blank to me—coming on, but I shall try to place this in some one's hands who will hunt up my darling Joan, and expose the unparalleled fraud that is being practiced upon blind old Philander Porter."

"BILL BIRD."

It is about useless for us to chronicle the conversation that followed, for the reader can surmise its nature.

The game was certainly up, and when they compared the two girls, Mr. and Mrs. Porter readily and instinctively distinguished the difference between their own child, and Editha.

When Editha was made aware that the old sailor was her father, she was very much affected, and their reunion was a touching one. Both had been erring and sinners; but they were of one accord, that there was much yet to live for, and together they knelt before the banker, his wife and daughter, and fervently prayed to be forgiven.

Naturally, Philander Porter was expected to answer for his wife and Joan, as well as for himself, but he hesitated, with a stern expression of countenance, and would probably have refused to grant the craved-for boon, had not Calamity Jane stepped forward.

She had removed the false beard from her face, and the wig from her head, and all saw that she was a woman!

"Mr. Porter," she said, "I and my husband, whom you know as Paul Primrose, will consider our services rewarded, if you will grant the desired forgiveness. Let bygones be bygones, and let the warmth of affection drive away the haunting Phantoms of the past."

And the forgiveness was granted.

Byron Bertrand was locked up, under guard, that night, to be taken to Carson City, on the morrow; but, somehow, Fen Franklin managed to crawl to the camp, and gave his captain so dead away that a mob, organized before morning, took the conspirator from the jail, and lynched him to a tree.

Franklin died, before morning.

The outlaw gang was broken up, but the fate of Herbert Halsey was never ascertained.

He was doubtless killed by the outlaws.

Fang-Tooth Jim died of the tremens, a few weeks later.

Having decided to return to England, Philander Porter gave David all his mining interests in Beelzebub, and there you can find David and Editha, now, the latter the contented wife of a handsome young miner.

After forcing a rich reward upon Dick and Calamity, the banker and his family took their departure for England, to occupy the Leeches; but it is doubtful, if, in all their wealth and grandeur, they will forget to feel grateful toward the two wild spirits of the wild West, who restored them their most precious treasure, and solved the mystery of Joan Porter.

With a yearning to see her adopted son, Rex, Calamity went back to her ranch, which Dick had purchased, several months before, in a picturesque and romantic Wyoming valley, not many miles from Cheyenne.

And she took the diamonds with her, as a gift from her Western Prince of Detectives!

Dick, yearning for a respite from the adventures that had so characterized his life, for over ten years, and longing for a visit to the scenes of his childhood, soon afterward packed his grip-sack, and set out for the city of New York.

THE END.

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- 410 Deadwood Dick's Diamonds.
- 421 Deadwood Dick in New York; or, A "Cute Case."
- 430 Deadwood Dick's Dust; or, The Chained Hand.
- 443 Deadwood Dick, Jr.; or, The Crimson Crescent Sign.
- 448 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Defiance.
- 458 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Full Hand.
- 459 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Big Round-Up.
- 465 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Racket at Claim 10.
- 471 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Corral; or, Boreman Bill.
- 476 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dog Detective.
- 481 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Deadwood.
- 491 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Compact.
- 496 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Inheritance.
- 500 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Diggings.
- 508 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Deliverance.
- 515 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Protegee.
- 522 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Three.
- 529 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Danger Ducks.
- 534 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Death Hunt.
- 539 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Texas.
- 544 Deadwood Dick, Jr., the Wild West Video.
- 549 Deadwood Dick, Jr., on His Mettle.
- 554 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Gotham.
- 561 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Boston.
- 567 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Philadelphia.
- 572 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Chicago.
- 578 Deadwood Dick, Jr., Afloat.
- 584 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Denver.
- 590 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Decree.
- 595 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Beelzebub's Basin.
- 600 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Coney Island.
- 606 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Leadville Lay.
- 612 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Detroit.
- 618 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Cincinnati.
- 624 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Nevada.
- 630 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in No Man's Land.
- 636 Deadwood Dick, Jr., After the Queer.
- 642 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Buffalo.
- 648 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Chase Across the Continent.
- 654 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Among the Smugglers.
- 660 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Insurance Case.
- 666 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Back in the Mines.
- 672 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Durango; or, "Gathered In."
- 678 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Discovery; or, Found a Fortune.
- 684 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dazzle.
- 690 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dollars.
- 695 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Danger Divide.
- 700 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Drop.
- 704 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Jack-Pot.
- 710 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in San Francisco.
- 716 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Still Hunt.
- 722 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dominoes.
- 728 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Disguise.
- 734 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Double Deal.
- 740 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Deathwatch.
- 747 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Doublet.
- 752 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Deathblow.
- 758 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Desperate Strife.
- 764 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Lone Hand.
- 770 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Defeat.
- 776 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Resurrection.
- 782 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dark Days.
- 787 Deadwood Dick, Jr., Defied.
- 792 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Double Device.
- 797 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Desperate Venture.
- 802 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Diamond Dice.
- 807 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Royal Flush.
- 812 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Head-off.
- 816 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Rival.
- 822 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Boom.
- 828 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Scoop.
- 834 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Proxy.
- 840 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Clutch.
- 845 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, High Horse.
- 852 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Devil's Gulch.
- 858 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Xanth-Hole Hustle.
- 863 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Bombshell.
- 870 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Mexico.
- 876 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Decey Duck.
- 882 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Silver Pocket.
- 891 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Dead Sure Game.
- 898 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Double Drive.
- 904 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s, Trade-Mark.
- 910 Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Tip-Top.

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- 589 Tom-Cat and Pardi; or, The Dead Set at Silver City.
- 622 Tom-Cat's Triad; or, The Affair at Tombstone.
- 631 Tom-Cat's Terrible Task; or, The Cowboy Detective.
- 638 Tom-Cat's Triumph; or, Black Dan's Great Confinement.
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- 745 Kansas Jim, the Cross-Cut Detective.
- 761 Marmaduke, the Mustang Detective.
- 773 The Rustler of Rolling Stone.
- 785 Lone Hand Joe, the Committee of One.
- 801 Kent Kirby, the High-Kicker from Killback.
- 823 The Doctor Detective in Texas.
- 872 Two Showmen Detectives in Colorado.

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- 180 Rosebud Rob; or, Nugget Ned, the Knight.
- 84 Rosebud Rob on Hand; or, Idyl, the Girl Miner.
- 88 Rosebud Rob's Reappearance; or, Photograph Phil.
- 121 Rosebud Rob's Challenge; or, Cinnamon Chip.
- 277 Denver Doll, the Detective Queen; or, The Yankee's Surround.
- 281 Denver Doll's Victory; or, Skull and Crossbones.
- 285 Denver Doll's Decey; or, Little Bill's Bonanza.
- 296 Denver Doll's Drift; or, The Road Queen.
- 368 Yreka Jim, the Gold-Gatherer; or, The Life Lottery.
- 373 Yreka Jim's Prize; or, The Wolves of Wake-Up.
- 385 Yreka Jim's Joker; or, The Rivals of Red-Nose.
- 389 Yreka Jim's New Role; or, Bicycle Ben.
- 394 Yreka Jim of Yuba Dam.
- 209 Fritz, the Bound-Boy Detective; or, Dot Lettie Game.
- 213 Fritz to the Front; or, The Ventriloquist Hunter.
- 244 Sierra Sam, the Frontier Ferret; or, A Sister's Devotion.
- 248 Sierra Sam's Secret; or, The Bloody Footprints.
- 253 Sierra Sam's Pard; or, The Angel of Big Vista.
- 258 Sierra Sam's Seven; or, The Stolen Bride.
- 334 Kangaroo Kit; or, The Mysterious Miner.
- 339 Kangaroo Kit's Racket; or, The Pride of Played-Out.
- 39 Death-Face, Detective; or, Life in New York.
- 69 The Boy Detective; or, Gold Rifle, the Sharpshooter.
- 96 Watch-Eye, the Detective; or, Arabs and Angels.
- 117 Gilt-Edged Dick, the Sport Detective.
- 145 Captain Ferret, the New York Detective.
- 161 New York Nell, the Boy-Girl Detective.
- 226 The Arab Detective; or, Snoozer, the Boy Sharp.
- 291 Turk the Boy Ferret.
- 325 Kelley, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia.
- 343 Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Detective.
- 400 Wrinkles, the Night-Watch Detective.
- 416 High Hat Harry, the Base Ball Detective.
- 426 Sam Slabides, the Beggar-Boy Detective.
- 434 Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives.
- 26 Cloven Hoof, the Buffalo Demon; or, The Border Vultures.
- 32 Bob Woolf; or, The Girl Dead-Shot.
- 45 Old Avalanche; or, Wild Edna, the Girl Brigand.
- 53 Jim Bludane, Jr., the Boy Phenix.
- 61 Buckhorn Bill; or, The Red Rifle Team.
- 92 Canada Chet; or, Old Anconda in Sitting Bull's Camp.
- 113 Jack Hoyle, the Young Speculator.
- 125 Bonanza Bill, Miner; or, Madam Mystery, the Forger.
- 135 Boss Bob, the King of Bootblacks.
- 141 Solid Sam, the Boy Road-Agent; or, The Branded Brows.
- 177 Nobby Nick of Nevada; or, The Sierras Scamps.
- 181 Wild Frank, the Buckskin Bravo; or, Lady Lily's Love.
- 236 Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado; or, Rowdy Kate.
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- 273 Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; or, The Rival Heirs.
- 299 A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-Taker.
- 308 Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; or, the Iron-Nerved Sport.
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- 358 First-Class Fred, the Gent from Gopher.
- 378 Nabob Ned; or, The Secret of Slah City.
- 382 Cool Kit, the King of Kids; or, A Villain's Vengeance.
- 438 Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher; or, A Son's Vengeance.
- 486 Sealskin Sam, the Sparkler; or, The Tribunal of Ten.

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- 490 Broadway Billy, the Bootblack Bravo.
- 514 Broadway Billy's Boodle; or, Clearing a Strange Case.
- 536 Broadway Billy's "Dimkitty."
- 557 Broadway Billy's Death Racket.
- 579 Broadway Billy's Surprise Party.
- 605 Broadway Billy; or, The Boy Detective's Big Inning.
- 628 Broadway Billy's Dead Act; or, The League of Seven.
- 669 Broadway Billy Abroad; or, The Bootblack in Frisco.
- 675 Broadway Billy's Beat; or, Beating San Francisco's Finest.
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- 696 Broadway Billy in Texas; or, The River Rustlers.
- 708 Broadway Billy's Brand.
- 711 Broadway Billy at Santa Fe; or, The Clever Deal.
- 720 Broadway Billy's Full Hand; or, The Gamin Detective.
- 735 Broadway Billy's Business.
- 738 Broadway Billy's Curious Case.
- 753 Broadway Billy in Denver.
- 762 Broadway Billy's Bargain; or, The Three Detective.
- 769 Broadway Billy, the Retriever Detective.
- 775 Broadway Billy's Shadow Chase.
- 783 Broadway Billy's Bagles; or, The Trio's Quest.
- 786 Broadway Billy's Team; or, The Combine's Big Pull.
- 790 Broadway Billy's Brigades; or, The Dead Alive.
- 796 Broadway Billy's Queer Request.
- 800 Broadway Billy's Ruffed.
- 805 Broadway Billy's Signal Scoop.
- 810 Broadway Billy's Sign Out.
- 815 Broadway Billy's Bank Racket.
- 821 Broadway Billy's Bluff.
- 826 Broadway Billy Among Jersey Thugs.
- 833 Broadway Billy's Raid.
- 839 Broadway Billy's Big Boom.
- 844 Broadway Billy's Big Bulge.
- 849 Broadway Billy's \$100,000 Snap.
- 856 Broadway Billy's Blind; or, The Bootblack Stowaway.
- 862 Broadway Billy in London.
- 868 Broadway Billy Shadows London Slums.
- 874 Broadway Billy's French Game.
- 880 Broadway Billy and the Bomb-Throwers.
- 906 Safety Sam, the Cycle Sport.
- 900 Jumping Jack's Jubilee.
- 887 Battery Bob, the Dock Detective.
- 890 Silver-Mask, the Man of Mystery; or, The Golden Keys.
- 899 Shasta, the Gold King; or, For Seven Years Dead.
- 420 The Detective's Apprentice; or, A Boy Without a Name.
- 424 Cibuta John; or, Red-Hot Times at Ante Bar.
- 439 Sandy Sam, the Street Scout.
- 467 Diaco Dan, the Dalay Dude.
- 506 Redlight Ralph, the Prince of the Road.
- 524 The Engineer Detective; or, Redlight Ralph's Resolve.
- 548 Mart, the Night Express Detective.
- 571 Air-Line Luke, the Young Engineer; or, The Double Case.
- 592 The Boy Pinkerton; or, Running the Rascals Out.
- 615 Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclones.
- 640 Bareback Beth, the Centaur of the Circle.
- 647 Tynecrater Tilly, the Merchant's Ward.
- 659 Moonlight Morgan, the "Finest" Man of Ante Bar.
- 894 Arizona Dick's Wipe-Out.

BY WILLIAM R. EYSTER.

- 190 Dandy Darke; or, The Tigers of High Pine.
- 210 Faro Frank; or, Dandy Darke's Go-Down Fard.
- 318 The Hustler Rogne-Catcher.
- 338 Poker Pete's Double Dodge.
- 351 The Tie-To Sport; or, High Hustling at Sinners' Flat.
- 388 Monte Saul, the Sport.
- 901 Diamond Dave, the Gilt-Edge Shooter.

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- 892 Bowery Ben in Chinatown.
- 911 Bowery Bob, the East-side Detective.

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- 68 Border Robin Hood; or, The Prairie Rover.
- 158 Fanny Frank of Colorado; or, The Trapper's Trust.

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- 908 New York Nat's Double.
- 902 New York Nat's In Colorado.
- 896 New York Nat in Gold Nugget Camp.
- 889 New York Nat's Deadly Deal.
- 883 New York Nat's Crook-Chase.
- 877 New York Nat's Trump Card.
- 871 New York Nat and the Grave Ghouls.
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- 788 Dick Doom in Boston; or, A Man of Many Masks.
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- 798 Dick Doom in the Wild West.
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- 819 Dick Doom's Girl Mascot.
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- 760 Dashing Charlie's Pawnee Pard.
- 766 Dashing Charlie, the Rescuer.
- 497 Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys.
- 757 Buck Taylor, the Comanche's Captive.
- 743 Buck Taylor's Boys; or, The Red Riders of the Rio Grande.
- 569 Pawnee Bill, the Prairie Shadower.
- 713 Pawnee Bill; or, Carl, the Mad Cowboy.
- 719 Pawnee Bill's Pledge; or, The Cowboy's Doom.
- 725 Pawnee Bill; or, Daring Dick.
- 692 Redfern's Curious Case; or, The Rival Sharps.
- 697 Redfern at Devil's Ranch; or, The Sharp from Texas.
- 702 Redfern's High Hand; or, Blue Jacket.
- 707 Redfern's Last Trail; or, The Red Sombre Rangers.
- 668 Red Ralph's Race; or, The Buccaneer Midshipman.
- 674 Red Ralph's Bold Game; or, The Wizard Sailor.
- 679 Red Ralph, the Shadower; or, The Freebooter's Legacy.
- 644 Butterfly Billy's Disguise.
- 650 Butterfly Billy, the Pony Express Rider.
- 656 Butterfly Billy's Man Hunt.
- 662 Butterfly Billy's Bonanza.
- 565 Kent Kingston; or, The Owls of the Overland.
- 570 Kent Kingston's Shadower; or, the Card Queen.
- 575 Kent Kingston's Duel; or, The Surgeon Scout.
- 586 Kent Kingston's Doom; or, The Buckskin Avenger.
- 545 Ladette Hun Down; or, The Buccaneers of Barrataria.
- 550 Ladette's Legacy; or, The Avenging Son.
- 555 Ladette's Confession; or, The Creole Corsair.
- And Fifty Others.

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- 897 Bob o' the Bowery; or, The Prince of Mulberry Street.
- 415 The Vagabond Detective; or, Bowery Bob's Boom.
- 452 Hotspur Bob, the Street-Boy Detective.
- 460 The Lawyer's Shadow; or, Luke's Legacy.
- 472 Jaunty Joe, the Young Horse-King.
- 494 Surly Slim, the Young Ferryman Detective.
- 504 Five Points Phil, the Pavement Prince.
- 509 Jack Juggers, the Butcher Boy Detective.
- 516 Tartar Tim; or, Five Points Phil's Menagerie.
- 526 North River Nat, the Pier Detective.
- 538 Wrestling Rex, the Pride of the Sixth Ward.
- 541 Jeff Flicker, the Stable Boy Detective.
- 551 Nick Nettle, the Boy Shadow; or, The Old Well Mystery.
- 559 Harlem Jack, the Office Boy Detective.
- 569 Brooklyn Ben, the On-His-Own-Hook Detective.
- 577 Pavement Pete, the Secret Sifter.
- 588 Jack-o'-Lantern, the Under-Sea Prospector.
- 608 Wide-Awake Bert, the Street-Stercor.
- 614 Whistling Jacob, the Detective's Aid.
- 628 Buck Bumblebee, the Harlem Hummer.
- 639 Sunrise Saul, the Express-Train Ferret.
- 649 Gamin Bob, the Bowery Badger; or, Scooping a Slippery Set.
- 658 Sky-Rocket Rob, the Life-Saver.
- 683 Salt-peter Sol, the New York Navigator.
- 694 Spicy Jim, the Only One of His Kind.
- 706 Tom Thistle, the Road-House Detective.
- 717 Mosquito Jack, the Hustler Gamin.
- 726 Dennis Duff, the Brown Sport's Kid.
- 744 Dick of the Docks, the Night-Watch.
- 765 Flipper Flynn, the Street Patrol.
- 771 Foxy Fred's Odd Pard; or, The Keener's Huge Hustle.
- 781 Cast-Off Cule, the Scapegoat Detective.
- 824 Bowery Billy, the Bunco Bouncer.
- 837 The Big Four of the Bowery.
- 846 Buck, the New York Sharper.
- 850 The Grand Street Arab.
- 855 The West Broadway Gamin.
- 860 The Boat-Club Mascot; or, Dan Decker's Double Deal.
- 864 The Union Square Raggam Boy.
- 878 The Street Arab's Blind.
- 886 The Five Points Lodging House Janitor.
- 890 Ace High, the Trump Card Detective.
- 895 Fifth Avenue Fred, the Valet Detective.
- 899 Basement Bert, the Boy Cobbler Detective.
- 903 Billy Blue-Blazes, the Dodger of the Docks.
- 907 Reddy Rusher, Bell-Boy 4-11-44.

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers.

98 William Street, New York.